

The Forum Gazette

Vol. 2 No. 7

New Delhi, 5 April - 19 April 1987

Fortnightly

Rupees Two

The Fairfax Fracas Is The President Involved

By Shashi Shekhar and T Haque in Delhi

New Delhi: Recent leaks from senior home ministry officials have added a new and intriguing angle to the Gurumurthy-Fairfax fracas that is today snowballing into the biggest crisis that any Indian government has ever had to face. The real reason for the arrest of the Indian Express financial adviser and correspondent, S Gurumurthy, these sources hint, is not because of his exposes on the high-flying Ambani group or the violation of the Official Secrets Act but because Express baron Ram Nath Goenka is believed to have passed on volatile discoveries made by the American detective agency Fairfax Group Incorporated, to President Zail Singh. Copies of Fairfax's initial reports are believed to have been channelled to the president via Gurumurthy and the president's letter leaked to Indian Express as a quid pro quo.

The explanation that Gurumurthy was arrested because of the publication of the President's controversial letter in the Indian Express is now more or less suspect since an Ahmedabad-based daily, Sandesh, had published the President's letter two days before Express and the Sandesh correspondent who scooped the story, Vijay Singhvi, was not touched by the CBI. Also Gurumurthy's arrest comes three months after a case was registered against him for violating the Official Secrets Act. The case was based on the fact that Gurumurthy, in his exposes last year on Dhirubhai Ambani's Reliance Group of Industries, had freely referred to confidential government documents.

The raid on press baron Goenka's Sunder Nagar residence at New Delhi, therefore, had to have a different motive. Defence Minister and former Finance Minister VP Singh had kept the Fairfax report close to his chest and, as is being speculated, may have planned to use these reports as a lever against business houses and politicians who were overtly pressurising the powers that are to get him to lay off. But, it now appears that the former finance minister had, intentionally or otherwise, kept Indian Express bigwigs informed on the Fairfax reports which are believed to have information on Indian citizens' funds abroad, including the finances of MP Amitabh Bachchan and his brother Ajitabh who recently became a Switzerland-based non-resident Indian.

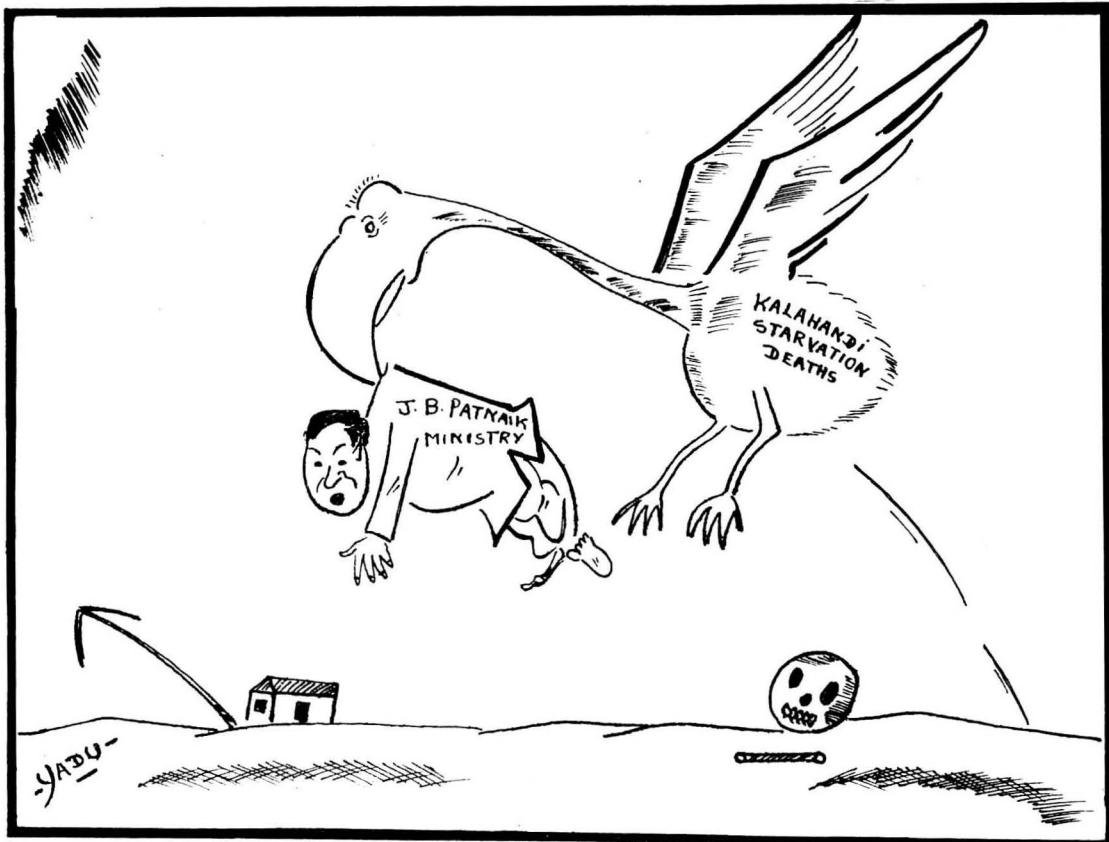
With V P Singh's departure from the finance ministry and the threat from that quarter nullified, industrialists and politicians, who had reason to believe their names were on the Fairfax list, now turned the heat

on Indian Express which, they suspected, knew the contents of the detective agency's reports. The publication of the president's letter in its March 13 edition may have merely provided the government with the much needed excuse to raid Goenka's premises for Fairfax documents and papers that could indicate the extent of the President's involvement in and therefore, knowledge of the whole affair. For, as things stand today, the President's actions can significantly affect the continuance or fall of the Rajiv Gandhi government.

Clearer Battle Lines

Events indicate that VP Singh, too, is ready to lay all cards on the table. His unilateral announcement in Parliament two weeks ago, during the debate on the Fairfax affair, that he was responsible for hiring the agency, not only tore to shreds the government's earlier contention that it was the Indian Express that had hired the detective agency but also left little doubt of a deep rift between the former Finance Minister and the present ministry, headed by prime minister Rajiv Gandhi. It is well known that a number of industrialists had complained to Rajiv of harassment under VP Singh's 'raid raj', among them JRD Tata, CK Birla, Sumati Morarjee and Lalit Thapar. It is also common knowledge that there is little love lost between VP Singh and Rajiv's chum, the actor turned — MP Amitabh Bachchan. That, put together with political grapevine rumours that it was Amitabh who effected a rapprochement between Ambani and the prime minister, and the battle lines become clear.

Continued on page 15, col 1



Three Hundred Starvation Deaths In Orissa

Government Remains Unmoved PM's Rescue Plan Non-Existent

By Pradeep Ojha

Bhubaneswar: When prime minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Orissa's Kalahandi district in July 1985, he heard innumerable allegations of starvation deaths from the villagers. He saw for himself what the non-implementation of poverty programmes had done to the area. And he quickly announced 'Operation Salvage', a scheme designed to nurse Kalahandi back to health. "I have come here and I have seen the condition; I promise you that something will be done." With these words did the prime minister leave, causing hope to well up in even the most cynical villager's heart.

Twenty months have passed since then. And even the district collector of Kalahandi, Chinmay Basu, openly admits that he has not even heard of Operation Salvage. He adds that there is not even a scrap of paper to substantiate the existence of such a rescue plan. Meanwhile, the villagers of Kalahandi are dying — dying of starvation, of malnutrition and because their bodies cannot take the diet of red ants, weeds, wild roots and grass any more.

Leave alone food availability, there seems not even the basic infrastructure to support the approximately 11,000 sq km district: There is no water, medicine or employment to be had for love or money, and children, therefore, continue to be sold as bonded labourers and mass migrations to adjoining Madhya Pradesh go on unchecked.

The firebrand Opposition MLA from Kalahandi, Bhakta Charan Das, has on many occasions brought this matter up for discussion in the state

Assembly. The Orissa government claims that there have been no starvation deaths in the state: officially, 160 persons have died in five blocks of Kalahandi because of various diseases. But unofficially, people claim, there have been at least 300 deaths in the area. And according to Das, the death toll will rise to 600 by the end of this month. But the government remains unmoved, and dissidence within its ranks only serves to further isolate those who rule. For example, on March 2, the Opposition-sponsored motion for the formation of a house committee to probe the deaths was, predictably, defeated but as many as 19 ruling party MLAs voted for the motion! And though the motion was denied, speaker P K Dash finally agreed to form a committee.

Why is Kalahandi without food today? The heavy rainfall in July and August last year damaged the paddy and millet kharif crops in the higher areas, and the low-lying areas did not receive the customary rain from September onwards. The crops

Continued on page 15, col 1

Janvani or Sarkarvani

By Kusum Tripathi

'Janvani', 'Newslane' and 'Sach Ki Parchaiyan' are known as examples of magnanimity of the Rajiv Gandhi's Government. This is because, in these programmes, the shortcomings of the government are brought to the fore. But if you scratch beneath the surface of the pile of programmes put forth you will find that there is a vast difference between the intended motive of the programme and the broadcasted result.

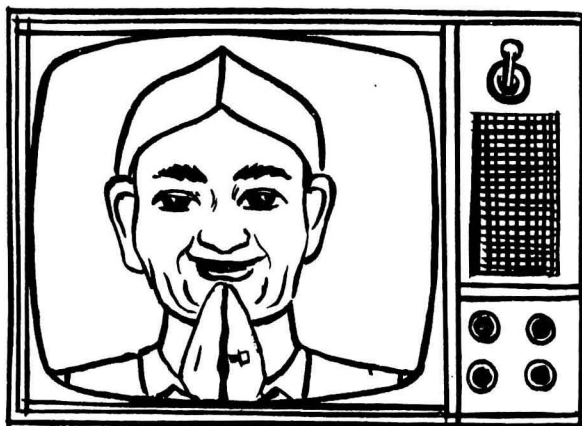
Janvani is telecast as a means of promoting in a big way, a positive image of the government. But the reality is such that, whatever be the ministry that features the programme, the questions and answers asked are the same. Questions that expose the real character of the ruling party and put in doubt its policies are not allowed. The nature of the questions asked is the same — the corruption in the different departments of the ministry, dearth of public facilities and the non-cooperation of officials. The attitude of every minister is such that the answers they give are general enough to avoid a straight forward stand. Such a trap of statistics is laid before people that it creates an illusion.

When the Home Minister was asked why crime was on the rise he said that on the contrary, figures show that it has dropped. When he was asked why communal riots were not ending in a particular State and what the government was doing about it, he replied that the enforcing of law and order is State matter. It is obvious that most matters pertaining to the Home Ministry are related to the law and order situation and this has a connection to the States; under these circumstances what was the Home Minister doing? This is only evading an answer. To all questions pertaining to the Railways, the

Railway Minister, Mr. Bansilal, answered in a dry tone 'We shall investigate; this cannot be done; this is wrong'. One can gauge from the responses of these ministers how serious they are about the problems of the people.

Even if Janvani does not become the platform for airing public dissatisfaction, this much is true that it is becoming the platform for the propaganda of the government policies. This aspect was made clear by the Janvani programme which was specially telecast in order to cover up the developing dissatisfaction among the people about rising prices prior to the Budget. The inflationary situation prior to the Budget was opposed not only by the opposition

one or two chief ministers, thus assuring the success of the programme. But from the view point of public values and public welfare, it is obvious that these programmes merely propped up the image of the minister concerned. The attitude is: if the work done is good, it is due to the 'topmost leader' of the country, and if anything goes wrong, the ministers, the bureaucrats or ultimately the common folk are responsible. The theme in the programmes like 'Sach Ki Parchaiyan' is that we all are guilty for whatever goes on. If there is anyone who deserves credit, it is only the 'topmost leader', that he alone is concerned about people's welfare. The people should have their



parties through rallies, bandhs and demonstrations but also by the whispered comments from among the members of the ruling party. Therefore it became necessary for the government to present its defense. The audience as usual asked simple direct questions like why is there a price rise; is not the government aware of the burden which has to be borne by the poor and middle classes; what does the government think about it? etc. However, no one questioned the fact that the government's policies are based on capitalism nor did any one discuss the subsidies given to the multinationals. Not even a mention was made about the looting and exploitation by the private companies. No one drew attention to the economic burden caused by foreign loans and import-subsidies. The Finance Minister actually said that "if the country has to progress, people should be ready to make sacrifices". No one asked who will progress and who will make the sacrifices. The Minister threatened that if people want the country to progress they will have to make sacrifices. It was not said that for the last 38 years, people have been making sacrifices to line the pockets of the richer sections.

Newslane is a beautiful example of the innocence of the Rajiv Government. It is presented by the staunch critic of Indira Gandhi and a supporter of Rajiv Gandhi — M.J. Akbar. In the beginning these programmes attacked

primary faith in 'principles' and not in 'leaders.' If this is not the right perspective, certain sections of people are unjustifiably held guilty and the real work gets obstructed. Some corrupt practices of a Chief Minister and the subsequent publicity given to it merely become aimless journalistic gimmicks, which do not give the desired turn to the existing political set-up. Even the person concerned often manages to escape from the scandal. Hence, programmes of such type become routine commentaries of what is happening.

The lodging of common people's complaints about the working of government organisation and machinery is also a major feature of 'Sach Ki Parchaiyan'. In the conversations conducted with the top authorities of the respective departments of the Government, the stress is more on their own justification and on the difficulties in the implementation of the law. Hence, the 'solution' of the problem is given little attention to. Often the person concerned avoids answering the questions. It is often contended by the supporters of such programmes that at least the people's genuine grievances are voiced publicly, which was not the case earlier. But, this is not the true picture of reality.

In all these programmes, the pattern of complaints is the same; the rampant corruption in the public organisations, the rude behaviour of the authorities with the public etc.

The answers given are also monotonous. 'Corruption is present everywhere. Some people are good. If you bring up the specific cases, the persons responsible will be punished' etc. Such and other similar pep-talks are regularly given, in which the really fundamental aspects are rarely

attended to. People are often brainwashed that the intentions of the Government are good and the fault lies only with the bureaucracy. Such programmes are doing the task of improving and activating this bureaucracy.

From Padgham,
Jan-April, 1987

Russia's Space Edge

By Arjun Ghosh

Even as the American space programme remains virtually stalled following the Challenger disaster of January, 1985, the Soviets are recording new triumphs and stealing a march over their arch-rival. Last week, Moscow TV telecast live the manned spaceship Soyuz TM-2's launch from Baikonur cosmodrome. Live TV coverage of rocket launching is unusual for the Soviet Union, but Soyuz TM-2 was on a very special mission. The spacecraft was to perform the first ever automatic docking with an orbiting space station (the Mir-progress 27), it's cosmonauts on board, Yuri Romanenko and Alexander Laveikin, were out to break the present space endurance record of 237 days (also held by Russians) and Soyuz TM-2 itself was a highly improved version of earlier manned Soviet spaceships. The Soviets, western experts agree, are today ahead of the US in the field of orbital space station, and last Saturday's (Feb 7) successful automatic docking of the 'new generation' Soyuz TM-2 with Mir-progress 27 was further proof of the Soviet edge.

The Mir (Russian for peace) orbiting station was launched about a year ago and is greatly advanced and more sophisticated than any so far launched. Western scientists, in fact, believe that Mir could well have been planned as a permanent station with groups of cosmonauts taking turns to man it. One British space expert, speaking over the BBC, said "The station is providing new standards of comfort in space... before long scientists may be sent up to do their work themselves."

Cosmonauts Romanenko and Laveikin are, of course, not scientists and as the first tenants of Mir 27, their work will be to help build the first 'module'. The essential difference between Mir 27 and other previous orbiting stations is that it is envisaged as a modular station, which can be built up. Each group of cosmonauts or scientists docking their spaceships with the station will set up a

specific module, or independent unit, in it.

Russian—W. European Collaboration

Romanenko and Laveikin's first module, interestingly, will be the product of Russian West European collaboration. The module was designed jointly by the Soviet scientists and the European Space Agency — it is primarily an astrophysical set-up with four X-ray telescopes among other sophisticated equipment and will be used to explore outer space from above the atmosphere's hazy layers. The telescopes will primarily be directed at galaxies where explosions have been recorded by earth-based instruments.

Later modules to be sent up with groups of other cosmonauts docking their Soyuz spaceships with Mir 27 will provide facilities for conducting various chem. RSS reactions that take place outside our atmosphere (such experiments could help produce new drugs and materials for industrial use that cannot be made on earth). One of the later modules, incidentally, is designed simply to add to the living quarters so that more cosmonauts and scientists could work in the station at a time. Indeed, before long, there might well be a little Russia in space, aboard Mir-progress 27!

Even as the Soviets were celebrating the successful docking of Soyuz TM-2 with Mir last week, the authoritative American aerospace Journal **Aviation Week and Space Technology Magazine** reported two major Russian disasters, including the failure of a 770-tonne SL-72 proton booster, USSR's most powerful rocket. The booster, according to the journal, did not light up during launch on January 30, only two days after the first anniversary of the Challenger explosion. That accident was of course not reported in the Soviet press or shown on TV, despite Mikhail Gorbachev's new policy of **glasnost** or openness. (NEWSSCRIPT)

The
Forum
Gazette

An Ekta Trust Publication

Panel of Consulting Editors
Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer,
I.K. Gujral, Madhu Kishwar,
Khushwant Singh, Jaya Jaidy,
Rajni Kothari, Amrik Singh,
Kuldip Nayar

Chairman, Board of Editors
Lt. Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora (retd.)

Managing Editor
Baljit Malik

Editors
Harji Malik, G.S. Sandhu,
A.S. Narang,

Associate Editor
Avtar Singh Judge

Circulation
Lt. Col. Manohar Singh (retd.)

Business Manager
Jatinder Kaur Lall

Editorial (Camp) Office
4 Bhagwan Das Road
New Delhi-110001.

Phone: 385270, 385042
Tx: 315220 HBLK FOR GAZETTE

The Forum Gazette

Subscribers should note that the first anniversary number of the Gazette will be out on June 5, 1987. It was decided not to publish this issue earlier on April 5 as volume 1 No 1 of the paper was dated June 1, 1986.

The management is also aware that it has not been possible to bring out the paper on time. Efforts are being made to plug various loopholes and it is hoped that from June onwards the publication schedule will not be disturbed.

Violence Meets Non-violence At the Malkot Mine

Rajiv Sethi

A battle is being waged on many fronts against the limestone quarrying which has already wrought havoc in the beautiful Doon valley and done irreversible ecological damage. This is an account of an ongoing investigation being conducted by the Delhi based Kalpavriksh — Environmental Action Group — into an incident which happened in the area where the affected villagers, long suffering and silent for many years, were driven into protest, but non-violent protest. The vested interests concerned took advantage of this to use violent methods to get their way. The investigation is continuing.

Nahin-Badkot village is in the Himalayan foothills, about 45 km from Dehradun and 85 from Mussoorie. The picturesque hamlet is adjacent to a 60 acre limestone mine which has been operating since 1962, when the area was leased by the U.P. government to Mr C.J. Gujral of Dehradun. Over the past months, Nahin-Badkot has witnessed a bitter struggle between villagers opposed to mining the region, and the mine lessee, who is determined to continue. The most violent manifestation of the conflict took place on March 20. Protesting villagers were threatened, stoned and struck with iron rods by a crowd of assailants, hundred strong, who subsequently removed several truckloads of limestone from the mine. The story of Nahin-Badkot is an eloquent example of the conflict arising out of the uneven impact of 'development' in an area where basically wealth and power are unequally distributed.

People's Helpless Plight

The mine has had harmful effects on the lives of the local people from the very beginning. Use of explosives for blasting and the subsequent scattering of debris has posed a serious hazard to both people and cattle. In places, vegetation has been submerged and farmland rendered less fertile. Acres of lush green mixed forest have been lost, forcing women to make longer journeys for fuel and fodder. Even more serious is the drying up of streams, on which the villagers depend totally for their water needs.



Surinder Singh, schoolmaster, resident of Nahinkala, struck by stones on face and body

Loss of farmland is not restricted to the immediate neighbourhood of the mine. Villages up to 18 km away have complained of loss of land to debris. Of the seven families who lived in the immediate vicinity of the mine in 1962, only two remain; the rest have been forced to abandon their fields. Kalam Singh, who has stayed on, complains of numerous instances of intimidation. His son has been framed on false charges and his 16 year old daughter abducted by mine labourers. It is difficult to exaggerate the plight of those like him whose lives have been thrown into turmoil by outside and uncaring powerful interests, impossible to console him by explaining the importance of industrial development.

Some of the women injured in the attack on the camp. L to R: Shyam Dai, Magan Dei, Itwari Devi and Roshni Devi



The 'Expert Opinion' Mystery

A writ petition was filed in 1983 by the "Rural Litigation and Entitlement Kendra and Others", pleading that mining in some parts of the Doon valley be stopped. Since then no less than three committees have been appointed to assess the impact of this mine. One committee was set up by the Supreme Court in August 1983, another by the Government of India in the same year, and the third, also appointed by the government, gave its report in January 1987. It is extraordinary that the reports of the first two committees, which consider the Nahin-Badkot area suitable for mining, completely contradict the findings of the third report on almost every point. The third and latest report is unequivocal about the damage caused by the mine and recommends its closure. Interestingly, a 1983 report by the Divisional Forest

Officer, East Dehradun (Mr D.R. Raturi) agrees with the findings of the 1987 committee and with the personal observations of people, like the writer, who have visited the mine. How the damage caused by the mine came to be 'overlooked' by the two earlier expert committees is a matter of speculation. The villagers assert that no one from the earlier committees so much as visited the mine. This could explain the discrepancies.

The newly published report comes at a time when a second writ petition, filed by Kalpavriksh, pleading that this mine be closed, is in the courts. This signals a change in the latest report however, the villagers, aided by Chipko activists, had begun to take matters into their own hands.

Yuvak Mandal Dal Formed

April 1986 saw the formation of the 'Yuvak Mandal Dal', an organisation of the youth of Nahin-Kala (the larger village unit of which Nahin-Badkot is a part), and the 'Mahila Mandal', a corresponding women's organisation. They began by writing letters of protest to government

officials and on the July 25, they planted several hundred saplings of broad-leaved trees on the truck road leading up to the mine. Within two days these were uprooted by agents of the mine lessee, aided by local policemen. On September 16 the 'Yuvak Mandal Dal' took its boldest and hitherto most effective action, when men, women and children from Nahin-Kala set up a camp beside the truck road and blocked the only access to the mine with their bodies.

Official Dishonesty Helps Mineowner

With the exception of one abortive attempt at breaking through the barrier on September 26, the strategy was entirely successful until the assault on March 20 this year. An important fact is that the original lease of the mine expired in 1982, and was not



Ramesh Kukreti, shopkeeper in Thano struck on head with iron bar (received 4 stitches) after being encircled and stoned

renewed by the U.P. government. Mr Gujral, in the court of the Civil Judge, Dehradun, pleaded that a first renewal of the lease was mandatory and managed to obtain an injunction in his favour in June 1983.

It is on the basis of this injunction that he has continued his operations, taking full advantage of the ambiguity of his legal position. Since the filing of the writ petition (November 1986) by Kalpavriksh and the publication (January 1987) of the third expert committee report, the prospect of closure must hails in this context that the March 20 assault, described below, tempt to extract a few truckloads of limestone before the curtain fell.

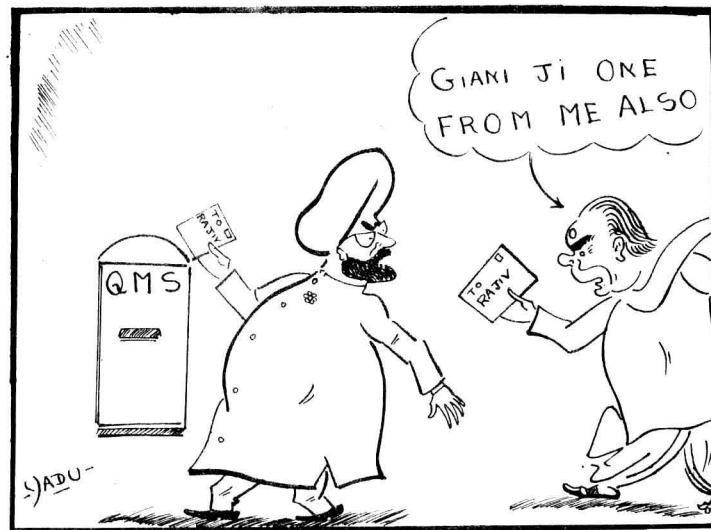
Unequal Confrontation

At about 10 a.m. on March 20, over a hundred men in five trucks and a jeep came up the narrow road leading to the mine face. The camp was almost empty of protesters since most of the men were attending the 'Jhanda-Mela' in Dehradun, and the blockade was easily broken. The trucks were loaded with limestone (excavated before September 1985) and began the descent. A group of nine villagers, who had been alerted, attempted to stop the trucks but being heavily outnumbered were assaulted and beaten with stones and iron bars by the mine workers. Ramesh Kukreti received a bone-deep skull injury and abrasions on his hand and shoulder; Virendra had abrasions and contusions on

his left arm, elbow, thigh and knee. Both Ramesh and Virendra received treatment at the Doon Hospital and their medical report tell much of the story.

Not one of the group of nine escaped without a serious injury, while the assailants made away with four loaded trucks of limestone. About sixty of them returned in the late afternoon for the same purpose, and the morning's scenario was re-enacted. This time women and children were among the injured. Surinder Singh, the worst injured, was struck on his face and body, thrown in front of a truck and threatened with death to mock him. When a Kalpavriksh team met him the following morning, he was still in a state of shock. The spirit of the villagers was wounded along with their physical injuries and the strategy of non-violence adopted by them from the beginning has received a formidable blow. But underneath the pain and shock, the strong conviction that theirs is a fight for justice has been strengthened by their ordeal.

The 20 year silence of the villagers in the face of what they clearly perceive to be an unjust intrusion into their lives, can only be understood in terms of their powerlessness and the paucity of options before them. That they were able to finally break out of this was a result of their own growing strength, bolstered by the assistance they have received from the Chipko movement and from interested parties in Dehradun and Delhi.



Kamladevi Chattopadhyay's World

Jaya Jaitly



Knowing Kamladevi Chattopadhyay as I do I could not write a review dissecting her memoirs in a few high-sounding literary words. A fitting tribute to her life's work, I thought, would be to extract what we can learn from it, compare it to the present day and to see how we can enrich our lives and "change society" as she once boldly declared she would to Rajaji.

To know Kamladevi Chattopadhyay and to read "Inner-Recesses, Outer Spaces" is to understand how harmony of thought and action alone can produce that rare quality of universality in a citizen. Her memoirs unfold a remarkable story of a woman in total control of her own life, who, fired by a spirit of enquiry, adventure, action and deep thought plunges wholeheartedly into the momentous events of the freedom movement. If anyone looks for a poetic tone or lyrical writing and seeks to eulogize Kamladevi Chattopadhyay, without attempting to see wherein lies the true and immense value of the book, it would be a disservice to an outstanding person who must be recognised today as an example of what it means to be a true Indian.

At this point of time, in the history of our country, middle class intellectuals suffer both from inflated opinions of their vision, while choosing to watch with paralytic despair the forces of destruction unleashed in society by man turning against man. They justify inaction through cynical pontification and for purely self serving motives. Kamladevi's account of her experiences and the concerns of the times, her sharp and illuminating portraits of men and women who were both genuinely great and genuinely human, must stir in every conscious mind a feeling of guilt or a desire for deep introspection. Do we sacrifice enough? Do we understand enough? Are we concerned enough? Do we do enough? These are the questions we must ask ourselves if we believe that the battle for genuine freedom is not over.

For those who cherish certain ideals and a sense of optimism, it will be a source of inspiration to mobilize the energy and will to involve themselves in social and political action. For those with a desire to view contemporary history from the experiences of a woman the book provides a sensitive and rare view.

An Indian Childhood

It is a sad comment on those who have moulded and influenced the cultural ethos of independent India, that an Indian childhood appears more

'Indian' during the British Raj than what it has become today. Kamladevi was brought up by her mother, with a sound knowledge of English and two other Indian languages, apart from her mother tongue, Kannada. She studied in a convent school, and till today keeps a wooden crucifix above her bed while declaring, "I could not accept the idea of conversion of faith through a ritual or that baptism alone saved one's soul, which seemed to be more a

"Learning about seasons, flowers, trees, the journey of the sun to the north, then the south, what effect it had on us, our habits, food, clothing, why these cosmic changes were important enough to be noted in our calendars". Compare this to what our children learn today from American comic books and television programmes which spread an imitative and elitist culture, far removed from what is the essence of our own culture.



Mrs. Kamladevi Chattopadhyay

superstition that a spiritual concept. I believe that if there is an ultimate liberation it can and should come through one's own conscious effort."

Childhood days meant preparing paper lanterns at home for Diwali; articles made from various parts of the banana tree adorned Dussehra displays. Janmashtami and Gauri Puja stirred not base emotions with processions threatened by violence but hours of exciting creativity, music and fun. The katta, a small platform used as a gathering place, serving as a community centre, a shelter for way-fares, a place to hold discourses or sing devotional songs, has now "Faded away from the community life as a common shelter." "In me", writes Kamladevi, "it has left a tinge of regret for nothing quite like it has evolved or emerged as a substitute. It has hardly a place in the harsh bustle of today. Card parties for the women of leisure and coffee houses for the youth, have sprung up like hybrid growth to while away time that seems to hang heavily."

Traditional entertainment provided by professional story tellers, the religious concept of Bhuta, Yakshganas, Kambala the buffalo race, intermixes with piano lessons and Hindustani and Karnatak Music. Experiences which moulded a true Indian childhood came from

The Genuinely Liberated Personality

Kamladevi worked at a time when the genuine understanding of egalitarianism was quite naturally introduced into political and social struggles. Gandhi, Jayprakash Narain, Jawaharlal Nehru, Yusuf Meherally, and Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia lived, worked and wrote with the conviction that women must be equal partners of men. She scoffs at the thought of associating with "feminist" activities, because her mother and the socialist and Gandhian influences in her life demonstrated that, with confidence, self esteem and motivation, women could participate in any form of mass action with equal strength and influence.

The portraits of the many women who illuminated and strengthened the freedom struggle, demonstrates the compatriot nature of their relationships with their husbands or male colleagues. The panorama of women with whom she worked leaves our present landscape pitifully barren. Many have written about the freedom movement but it is only Kamladevi who has gently, but consciously, highlighted the stalwarts among the women. Starting from Dr. Annie Besant who had by then, "Risen as one of the most outstanding world figures of her time. Even historically she has

few women equals", to Pandita Ramabai, a contemporary of Maharishi Karve and closely linked with him in his work. Of her Kamladevi writes, "In my estimation she is the greatest Indian woman of our time. I cannot think of anyone before or after her who can compare with her scholarship, high intellect, wide vision, compassion for humanity, overflowing with love, dedication to service."

How many today know of Ramabai's book, "The High Caste Hindu Women", and "Stree Dharma Nithi"? How many know that as a Sanskrit, Hebrew, Greek and Marathi scholar, born of Brahmin parents, she married a Bengali Harijan scholar and later converted to Christianity? She participated in public activities which were then unheard of for woman and was "a pioneer in urging women to become active in politics". She was the first woman to join the National Congress, appealed to women to take up the medical profession, established kindergarten schools and institutions for women. A highly honored iconoclast, Pandita Ramabai was isolated and rejected after her conversion. Kamladevi pertinently comments on this when she says, "only one great social worker saw the reality behind this tragedy and blamed our society for her conversion: Shri Angarkar, a noted social reformer of that time". For all the progress made in various fields such as literacy, media and technology, which woman can today claim to have done as much? The true liberation of woman comes through participatory action. They cannot become free in a vacuum, nor does throwing off the figurative or literal veil mean anything unless this is achieved through social, political, community action to solve the problems mankind faces as a whole.

On Other Women In Her Life

Besides Anandibai Joshi, Ramabai Ranade and Agnes Smedley, Madame Bikhaji Cama lights up her days while she was a student in Europe. To meet, "a young revolutionary now in exile in Paris" and come to know her as, "The only Indian woman revolutionary to attain political maturity, exceptional in that period, with a clear grasp of the true nature of imperialism and its heavy international ramifications," was heady stuff indeed. Madame Cama devised a national flag at the Stuttgart National Congress installing India as a political entity as far back as in 1907. Umabai Kundapur, an unusual and enterprising social worker is described in a manner both direct and simple, revealing the dynamic energy of woman as well as her softer and more gentle ways of facing life's vicissitudes — "Her public career in a backward region of Karnataka started when women were still confined to domestic chores. To recruit women volunteers and train them in public camps for physical culture, route marches, etc. was then an outlandish

idea. She laid herself open to wild criticism with great patience and good humour. She had to toil and wear down the crusty dykes of conservatism... still youthful at just past thirty, rather frail, of a light frame, soft of speech, she made an odd captain of an army of volunteers training for National Struggle."

Umabai set up Bhagini Mandals and Tilak Kanya Shala girls, schools all over Karnataka and today at the age of 90 still takes active interest in their progress and prosperity.

Pioneer Women Of Destiny

It is portraits of outstanding pioneering spirits like Margaret Cousins who blazed the trail for Indian Women's freedom and encouraged Kamladevi to contest for election to the Madras Legislative Council as soon as membership was thrown open to women that should serve us as examples of bold and equal participation in the progress of the nation. Can one imagine that in 1927 an Irish woman "organised the campaign, publicity, volunteer corps and all the necessary paraphernalia" of an election?

Her personal experiences of the momentous lives of Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, Anandibai Karve, Prabhavati, Satyavati and Eleanor Roosevelt, stud her narrative. They are revealed as women of destiny whether as wives of great men or as outstanding individuals in their own right. For Kamladevi as a woman it was important to record on Kasturba, "What will remain an enigma to me is how she could be such an intimate part of this force and yet retain her individuality, stand up to him when she felt she should not bend. When she gave in, it was not in weakness. She had her own measures and scales in which she weighed her actions and satisfied herself. One may well echo what she had ultimately realized, as she rather reluctantly allowed herself to say: One may not always agree with a course he takes but one does finally find that it was the right one, in any even it was the straight one".

Later in 1942 as President of the Women's Conference Kamladevi sets the tone for the nature of women's struggles, "I wanted the focus on women to shift from sex to social gene. I had never been in tune with feminism as advocated in the West, where men and women were linked up in confrontation, as though they were irreconcilable elements. In India women's problems had been treated as social, part of a malaise in the body of our social constitution. Men and women had been struggling to rectify this for half a century or more, a joint battle to better the whole society, wipe off caste distinctions, the concept of untouchability and the like". Typically she highlights almost unconsciously through her memoirs the lives of great women while recounting their role as equal partners and comrades, colleagues and co-

and Today's India

workers alongside the greatest of men.

The Relevance Of Gandhi

Another equally important quality of Kamaladevi's memoirs is the consistent voice of a woman of today, who speaks with conviction based on the inspiration and ideas of Gandhi. Today these are in danger of being relegated to the dusty archives of history, untried by a cynical, westernized jargon-orientated generation of planners. Gandhians are considered fossilized and indeed many have not adapted relevant ideas to changing times as Gandhi himself would have done. There are timely reminders and clues of Gandhi's thoughts on crucial matters such as education, a national language, village industry and co-operatives. Arts, crafts and theatre form part of our true culture heritage. These have been distorted or ignored today, creating unnecessary tensions in an already problem ridden environment. She writes of Gandhi's idea of a link language in Hindustani — "By this he meant a new language something fresh to be evolved." In those days Hindustani Prachar Sabhas sprung up all over the country firing everyone with the urge to learn a simple binding tongue that would link people to the great national movement. "Today we have strayed so far away from his language formula that enlightened people from the south watch in dismay as Tamilians stridently oppose the rigid purely sanskritized imposition of Hindi by northerners with a narrow outlook."

The education policy that was lost

While the New Education policy and Navodaya Vidyalayas, with their images of modernised excellence emanating from computers and swimming pools are being propagated, Kamaladevi describes the Nai Talim. Annie Besant believed that "The young properly educated will make India strong while Gandhi's deep concern was 'What would it matter if they learnt everything but did not know how to live in brotherliness with their fellow beings?' Television and computers and prepackaged programmes negate Gandhi's idea of developing in the child his hands, his brains, his soul. Experience of handling, exploring and learning through objects of everyday use, of using hands to stimulate the creative spirit to see and feel rather than to read in cold print, these were the formulations of the 'vital Nai Talim which would have well brought about a fruitful revolution had India adopted it as a format for basic education.'

Dedicated and genuine political and social work involved Kamaladevi in the organising and running of co-operatives and labour and peasant unions. When she joined the Socialist Party she settled in Mangalore to create a base for sound grass root work unlike today when "party" work is shunned by social

workers who regard themselves as apart from politics and when "voluntary" work draws people into battles over whether money for administrative expenditure should come from the government or foreign agencies. Those who worked in those days were fired by a sense of favour and sacrifice that never gave rise to such predilections.



Kamaladevi arrives for an Amnesty Meeting

Motive For Action

Kamaladevi's life and those of her associates demonstrate that a concern for one's fellow man, and a deep and intense commitment to freedom is what leads to genuine social service culminating in political acts. When such work is based on a sound ideology and a concern for fundamental philosophical and moral issues, the difference between man and woman are erased. In this context, the consideration of the nature of terrorism and the episode of a delicate clash of perception involving Kamaladevi, Acharya Kriyalani, Jawaharlal Nehru and Gandhi on the issue of a resolution on Bhagat Singh at the Karachi Congress indicates the high level of emotions and concerns that existed during the freedom movement.

Congress And Socialism

Those were the days when common salt was enough to "stir people out of despair and hopelessness and the mere sight of women picketing made the public hold their breath in wonder". In today's times of symbolic satyagrahas and arrests preplanned to last only between breakfast and dinner we could well ask what happened along the way to make India "jaded, weary" cynical and disillusioned? Kamaladevi analyses this partly in the light of the relationship between the socialist party and the Congress. When Pandit Nehru took over as congress president in 1936 he showed no particular interest in the Socialist Party other than taking Jay Prakash Naryan, Acharya Narendra Dev and Achyuth Patwardhan into the working committee. She writes, that it was also perhaps the origin of the Congress itself, having been set up by Allan Octavian Hume, a seasoned and shrewd bureaucrat that blunted the emerging revolutionary thrust. The socialists, a small band of idealists, expected many things. They offered alternatives, threw out new ideas, cut new paths and

set new directions. Yet, if this group had come to power it could not have created something new without entirely changing the existing political set up. Her strongest and most devastating premise follows. The genuine democratic pattern of working up from within rural communities was never attempted by the ruling party. The few

voluntary efforts with rare exceptions, were mostly unwellcome, some suspect. From planning to executing, every state move was handed down from above, the very antithesis of democratic process. The worst was perpetrating these perversions in the name of a pre-socialist regime".

Kamaladevi muses, "Perhaps if the original socialists had integrated more fully with the National effort from the start, the garb of socialism may not have attained the dimension it did". Whether present and past socialists would agree with this view is debatable but the condemnation of bogus socialism is loud and clear all the same.

Arts And Crafts As A Philosophy

As Kamaladevi withdrew from politics her life-long concern for crafts, the arts and theatre re-

emerges with the influences of Anand Coomaraswamy, G. Venkatachalam of the Theosophical Society and Gandhi's philosophy on handicrafts, guiding and influencing her. They related this world constantly to social action and politics of another sort.

Gandhi's relationship with handicrafts and the village artisan was never one of patronage. He expounded "what was then considered one of his wierd philosophies but now proved scientific, the need for using our hands, one of our chief medium for creative expression. Equally compelling was the need to preserve what we could of this grand heritage... association is the essence of relationship which endears articles of everyday use to the user... in the Indian tradition, craftsmanship does not mean making novel and exotic articles to please one's fancy, but endowing everything we use in our daily life with beauty."

Work done in the name of handicrafts today continues only to propagate the feudal and patronising models. Awards are "given", shows are "arranged", "Utsavs" are "held" and the craftsman, a central figure in Gandhi's view of a sound and vibrant village structure, becomes either a museum piece or languishes when nothing is "done" for him. Kamaladevi's meeting at the Boston Museum in America with Anand Coomaraswamy, who, like Gandhi, treated culture as a significant index to the social organism, is memorable for what he asserted, "Nothing was created that was not without a purpose. No craftsman would turn out an object that was not functional. The so-called students of Indian art also miss its totality, its relationship with every aspect of life. Ideas like art for arts sake are meaningless to me". Highly industrialized societies and those that expand their arms technology destroy the individual, the culture of the country and shatter the potential for creativity and inner harmony. It

is in this context that we must view the self defeating aspects of our astronomical defence budget while "promoting" culture alongside.

Word & Action

Kamaladevi's many faceted concerns and personality is reflected in her writings as in her action even today. If there is a problem, she prefers to act rather than wax eloquent. Her language becomes direct with a characteristic no nonsense approach. Of her childhood she writes that she was made to learn that "Shivaji was a brigand who looted people and lots more of similar revolting stuff". Her disgust gets the better of her language which is as it should be for emotion should not allow itself to be stifled by stylized language.

Today in her eighties she still has the will to file a writ in the Supreme Court for the release of minor detainees illegally jailed after Operation Blue Star. This was far more effective than her experience as India's representative on the Human Rights Commission in Geneva after the war. What she writes of the experience may well apply to all international 'shows' today if only bureaucrats and public men were honest enough to admit it. Writes Kamaladevi, "I sat three solid months on the Commission. So far as redressing complaints was concerned, it was worse than minus a big zero. The atmosphere was arid though Geneva was beautiful. For weeks we wrangled over punctuation marks in our meticulous drafts on national decisions".

As Kamaladevi ends her book there is no sadness of advanced age, nor the nostalgia for better times, no bitterness nor disillusionment. She turns instead to an important aspect of any life: the seeking of "the small delights" thereby demonstrating the supreme humanness of an individual who seeks to retain her sense of harmony from within an increasingly troubled world.

R.K. CONSTRUCTION (LONDON) LTD. BUILDING CONTRACTORS



4 Station Road, Manor Park, London E12 5BT.
Tel: 01-514 3713

Sardar Gurcharan Singh

A Birthday Tribute

Srimati Lal



Sardar Gurcharan Singh, the grand old man of

'Delhi Blue Pottery', turned 91 early this March. At a personal little celebration complete with a delicious chocolate cake set atop a symbolic potter's wheel at the Gallery Aurobindo in Hauz Khas, Gurcharanji jovially entered his ninth decade amidst resounding cheers from Delhi art lovers.

Later in the week, I had an opportunity to meet him at his home and studio next to Safdarjung Hospital: a gracious, sprawling establishment beneath shimmering trees, where, it truly seemed, time stood still. In the sanctum-like living room of the artist's shaded bungalow, built in 1934, I asked him some questions about his life and art, over warm cups of tea and biscuits... the artist's articulate alertness was nothing short of amazing.

Gurcharanji, when and how did you first develop your interest in pottery?

I started learning the art of pottery in 1918, at the age of 22, from a Pathan potter who was senior to me by about ten years. He worked in a factory belonging to my father's friend, a gentleman from Kabul. I was a science student. I had always thought I'd join the Forest service after my B.Sc. But my adopted father, the owner of this new pottery factory, got me involved in it. And in 1919, he sent me to Japan for three years, to learn their special skills. In 1922, I had my first exhibition — in Tokyo after studying at Japan's Higher Technical Institute. I had many exhibitions after that... I have a particular corner in my heart for Bengalis. The famous artist from Santiniketan, Sarada Ukil, came and stayed in this house for one year. He designed the mosaic tiles on my floors specially for my house.

These tiles are of a vintage Bengali design, very aristocratic, dating back to the Tagorean days of the Bengal Renaissance. I wonder whether you ever met Tagore. Tell us more about your soft corner for Bengali culture...

I never actually met Tagore. But I went to his Santiniketan, three times. It is like a temple to us — a pilgrimage. I met the painters Nandalal Bose and Ramkinker (Baij). Ramkinker was a close friend of mine. He brought stone from the Kangra Valley in Himachal Pradesh to make the statue of Kubera (the god of wealth) and his consort, which stands opposite the All India Radio building in Delhi next to the Reserve Bank of India. Sarada Ukil used to teach my wife painting. I married my employer's daughter. She always liked to paint directly with colour. But teachers were very particular, in those days... Sar-

ada Ukil would always say, you must first master the line, before you can use colour...

I have had three exhibitions of my works in Calcutta. The audiences are good over there. The first was in Ajit Mukherjee's gallery, Art History House, in the '50's. Then, I had one at Ranu Mookerji's Academy of Fine Arts, in the '60's. But I was very disappointed with her sense of organisation! She arranged nothing properly for the show! We actually had to hire real cartwheels and arrange them ourselves out in the open, for the Academy exhibition! Of course, such wheels were used for pottery 10,000 years ago... then later on, in 1979, I had another exhibition at Calcutta's British Painters' gallery. That's a good gallery.

I have heard that you go to the Kangra Valley, to the village of Andretta, each summer, to work. I once went to Andretta in the summer of 1976, and met the famous Sikh painter Sant Sobha Singh... I heard you were there at the time, but didn't get to meet you...

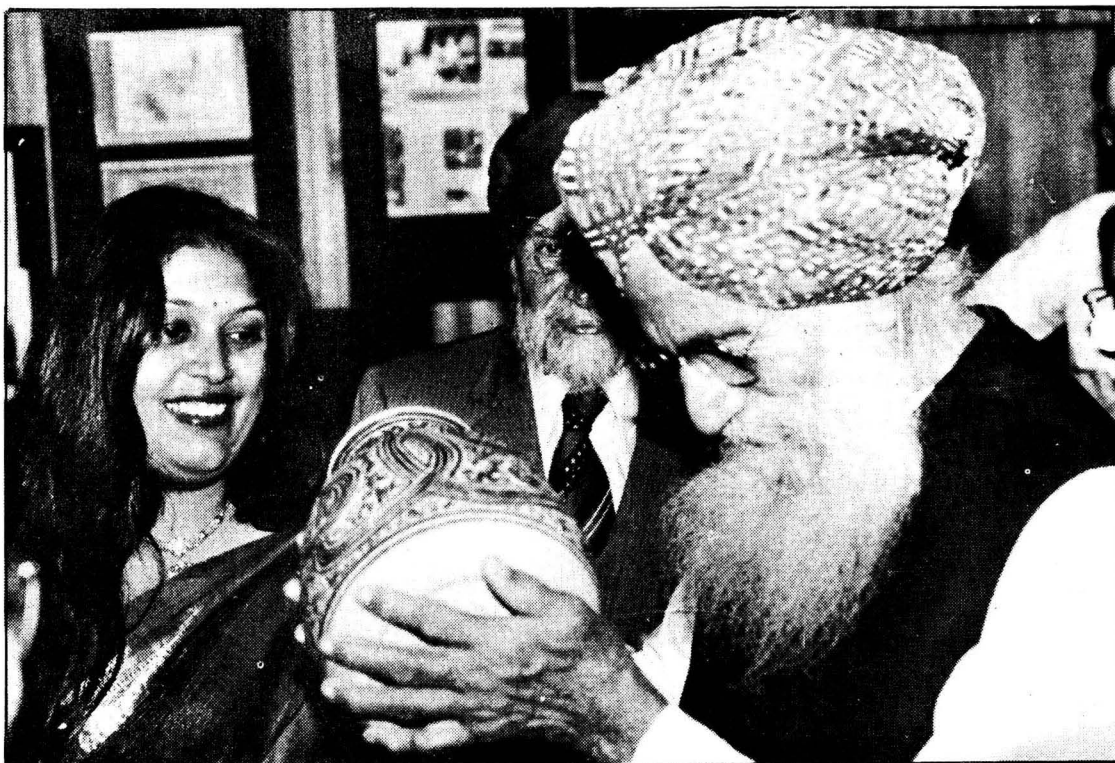
Oh, so you have been to Andretta! Then you know all about us. Yes, I work there in my farmhouse every summer. I have known Sobha Singh from 1929. He was two or three years younger than me. I was with him during his last illness in summer last year... he told me he was not feeling well. He didn't think he would have to be taken to hospital. But I was with him there... this painting of Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib, the fifth Sikh saint, on my wall, is by Sobha Singh. This is a magnificent study of the young saint in profile. Beneath, on the right-hand corner, is an inscription in the late artist's flowing handwriting. It says: "To my friend, Sardar Gurcharan Singh: one of the few Punjabis who understands the meaning of Art."

Gurcharanji, do you come from an artistic family?

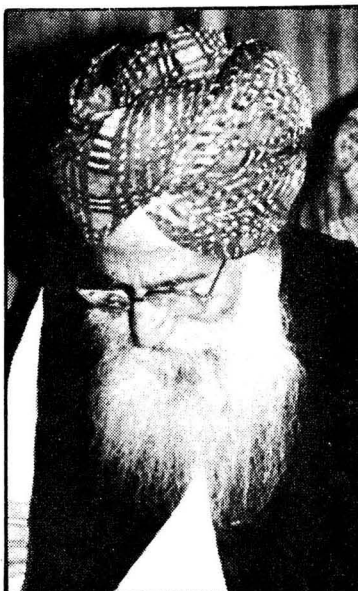
No, my father was an engineer... (he worked) on the road from Jammu to Srinagar. I was born in Srinagar, in Kashmir. We were an aristocratic, cultivated family. My background was cultured, although there were no other artists.

You are most famous for your path-breaking 'blue pottery'. But here, around us, are pieces of so many colours. What draws you most to the colour blue — why have you made it your 'signature', so to speak?

Because I liked it. I like it even now. For the first few years, I only did blue pottery. Now some other colours are used too, because some people preferred it. More than 500 years ago, the Pathan kings who came to India asked their potters from Afghanistan to make blue tiles to decorate their forts, tombs and monuments. One of these original



Sardar Gurcharan Singh: Father of Delhi's Blue Pottery on his 91st birthday at Gallery Aurobindo.



Pathan potters settled in Multan and the other in India. Their art was lost for many centuries. I revived this long-dead art. The British liked the colour very much. It was they who called it 'Delhi Blue', because it was not Prussian Blue or turquoise, it was a typically Indian shade of blue...

There is another famous blue-pottery school, that of the Jaipur pottery of Rajasthan. Has this in any way influenced your works?

Do you see that traditional urn up there, on my shelf? Take it down and have a look. This has dark blue on turquoise swirling patterns. It is an inspired piece, which I made seven or eight years ago...

(I express my fear that I will drop the urn, but Gurcharanji urges me to feel its surface. It is a large, classical piece of powerful grace, which combines tradition and contemporaneity. The patterns on it are stylised, suggesting peacock, reed and flower simultaneously. This is an independent creation, no ordinary imitation of traditions, but a new tradition in itself.)

The artist continues...

Every piece in art pottery is different. This is its difference

from commercialised pottery, which is not made by hand alone. I rejuvenated such art pottery, where each piece is distinct, as unique as a separate painting. I have also made jalis (trellises) for the Buddhist temple in Bodhi Gaya at the site of Buddha's birth. The panels of royal elephants on the front of Travancore House (now the location of the MRTD Commission, on Kasturba Gandhi Road) are among my earliest works. These date back to 1928 or '29. (The artist shows me some delicate glazed tiles on the wall of a small exhibit-room, with beautiful bird and flower patterns in shades of blue and ochre on bone-white backgrounds. On a low table in a corner are rows of dazzling Delhi Blue goblets. Abstract, stylised vessels and urns in subtle, time-worn colours draw the attention. They could seemingly belong to any period in time.)

What have been the influences on your work?

Well, the Japanese potters are extremely skilful, but it's the Koreans who possess really high skill. My employer also sent me to Korea and I learnt a lot over there. About 1,400 years back a Korean prince came to Japan, and brought with him silk weavers, fine potters, and also Buddhism.

(Gurcharanji has a pile of fascinating sepia-tinted photographs on the coffee-table before us. I ask him if I could see them. In a photograph of 1922, I see the artist as a strikingly handsome young man of 26, seated at one end of a large dining table surrounded by young Japanese art students. It is the same chiselled, royal face; the same intense and piercing eyes looking directly at the viewer Beautifully crafted porcelain soup-bowls adorn the table.)

Gurcharanji, please share with us the secret of your youth!

(Smiling) Work is the secret of a man's good health. In function lies beauty. That is the wonder of pottery: it cannot just be beautiful, it must be functional. In the west, pottery is considered a form of therapy. It is absorbing, simple, and makes you concentrate fully. This is why primitive man took to it so easily. When a creation comes out of the furnace, you should just see the glow on the face of the potter: the colour he sees was not there before, it has emerged from the fire. True colour comes out of fire. I have many students who come to learn pottery because they are troubled and want peace within them.

I lead an active and happy life. My only problem is that now, the government has removed two-thirds of my original land here so I don't have the same space I used to have for my workshop. Now there is this urban land ceiling act that no man can own more than 500 yards of land... my estate used to be 1 acre or more. Now the government wants to build an extension of the Safdarjung Hospital on it. Sarada Ukil had built a nice house nearby, soon after I built mine. But his next generation did not maintain it. Now it has been sold.

(The artist says this with a hint of alteration.)

I am left with the image of an imposing, proud being with all the grandeur of an aging king. This is an inborn regality, sans flamboyance or ostentation. His rooms and workshop are sparse, pristine, with the barest of necessities adorning them in a pure stillness. Tiny birds flock into the house from the rambling garden, outside the windows bordered with sky-blue tiles. They hop carelessly across the flowery mosaic floors, as if with the instinctive knowledge that this is a place where they will surely find peace.) ●

Videshon Mein Bhartiya Krantikari Aandolan

Videshon Mein Bhartiya Krantikari Aandolan by Vishwamitra Upadhyay; published by Pragatisheel Zan Prakashan, New Delhi, 1986, PP: 850, 2 Vols. Price Rs. 100 each.

Those who rule by the sword, said Shakespeare, 'shall perish by the sword! But before meeting that inevitable fate the British, who used increasing terror to perpetuate their rule in India, dubbed the revolutionaries as terrorists. A sizeable section of the leadership of the Indian National Congress echoed this charge, so much so that for both, the British and Congress, revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and overseas movements like the Gadar Party and the Indian National Army were political "untouchables". In spite of this shared apathy, the revolutionary movement in India and abroad was aimed at strengthening and supplementing the mass uprising against the British.

Abused as "terrorists", "foreign stooges" and even as pure and dreaded "bandits", the Indian revolutionaries aimed at playing, and did play a very vital role in liberating the motherland from foreign yoke. The movement also enjoyed very powerful support base outside India, in Britain, Germany, America and the Soviet Union. Strangely, the rulers of independent India did little to highlight events like the formation and role of the Gadar Party, the Komagatamaru incident, the British-Indian army revolts in Egypt, Suez, Singapore and Hongkong, the formation and advance of the Indian National Army and the glorious deeds of overseas revolutionaries, beginning with Shyamji Krishna Verma to Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Now, an individual, Vishwamitra Upadhyay, has attempted to fill this gap through his pioneering and monumental work, "Videshon mein Bhartiya Krantikari Aandolan."

Calling the Indian revolutionaries "terro-socialists", he asserts that these fine and brave sons of the soil used "terror to advance social transformation". What motivated them was the first War of Independence of 1857, and he presents unsurmountable evidence to prove that the revolu-

tionary target both in India and abroad, was to spark off an 1857 type revolt in the British-Indian army, culminating in the overthrow of foreign domination by mass uprising.

Limiting his canvas to the years between 1905 and 1947, Upadhyay tells us the detailed story of the establishment of an "India House" in London by Shyamji Krishna Verma, and its development by comrades like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, Virendranath Chattopadhyay, S.P. Rana and Madam Bhikhaiji Rustamji Cama. He presents a vivid description of the shifting of the activities of these revolutionaries to Germany, and then to America, and tells us how they had to struggle with the governments of these countries to keep the movement totally independent of their influence.

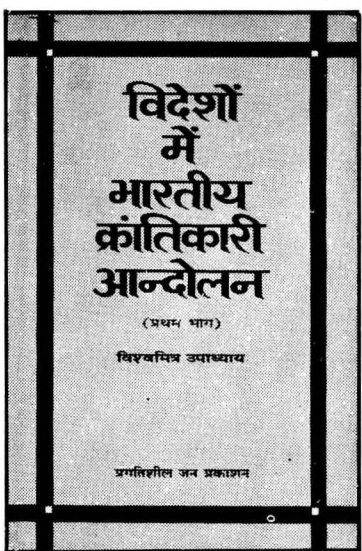
Common Aspirations

The book presents enough evidence to emphasize that the Indian revolutionary movement in foreign countries was not only closely linked with its counterpart in India, but it also shared common aspirations and efforts which culminated in a number of revolts of British-Indian troops, stationed in different parts of the world in two world wars, particularly in Egypt, Hongkong and Singapore. These were in addition to the formation and onslaughts of the Indian National Army and its provisional government, under the leadership of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Moreover, the book contains enough data to highlight the fact that revolutionary emigrants, specially to America, did send arms, money, literature and even trained personnel to support their Indian counterparts. In fact, the U.S. Prased Yugantar Ashram (San Francisco) had become such an important base that the British had to use all their shrewdness and influence to persuade the Americans to try the revolutionaries concealed there in their courts, and thus succeeded in weakening the movement by imprisoning a number of them.

The book devotes a large number of its pages, and rightly so, to the formation and activities of the Gadar Party, which in fact was the largest organised nucleus, and which included almost all the revolutionary activists in the U.S. The most important contribution made

by the Gadar was the army revolt in Singapore in 1915, where the 22nd and 23rd cavalry and also the 36th and 47th Sikh regiments revolted, along with a number of other British-Indian regiments stationed there. According to the author

"The rebels divided them into three parts. The first group had to release the German prisoners of



war, the second had to attack and capture the Colonel's bungalow and the third group had to hold and bar any assistance reaching the enemy."

The rebels of the Gadar Party shook hands with the German P.O.s and asked them to join the anti-British revolt. Till then two Germans had been killed. The Germans refused to join the revolt. Later the rebels returned to their camps in desperation. According to the *New York Times*, "When the authorities got enough arms and men from different places they succeeded, with difficulty, in controlling the situation by February 19th, though 600 rebels could not be traced." The rebels acted through emotion, rather than according to a well planned scheme, and though they succeeded in their first task of releasing the German POWs and killing a few Europeans, they could not make any headway for want of a competent leader and proper organisation. (Page 361-363 Vol. I).

INA and the Japanese

The formation and the role of the Indian National Army is not unknown, but what the author highlights is how the Japanese opposed, tooth and nail, the

demand of the INA to bring Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to head the force, and that they, the Japanese, in order to nip the operation in the bud, made the then Chief, General Mohan Singh, captive in a tiny, uninhabitable island. Obviously the Japanese resisted handing over control of the INA and the provisional government to Subhash Chandra Bose, because notwithstanding the Soviet and Communist suspicions about him, the Japanese knew only too well that Subhash Bose was neither a fascist nor a Nazi, that they would not be able to force him to play second fiddle to their interests in South Asia.

Although the Indian revolutionaries, particularly Virendranath Chattopadhyaya, while he was in Germany, maintained close links with the Bolshevik leaders even before the success of the Russian Revolution, and in spite of the fact that the Soviet Union was quite sympathetic to the cause of Indian revolution, it had its misgivings about Subhash Chandra Bose. The author says that these misgivings were based on a faulty assessment of Bose, both by the Soviets and their Indian Communist friends. Because of this they were cool to his initiative in Afghanistan in late 1930s in contacting the Soviets. When this failed he went to the Germans (p. 311, Vol II). In the author's words "both the Soviet officials and Indian communists, for want of correct data, wrongly evaluated Netaji and some of them even used abusive language against him. Later the Indian communists and the Soviet Union realized their mistakes" (p. 327, Vol II).

Navy Revolt

Another important contribution made by this book is its examination of that aspect of the revolt of the Royal Indian Navy in 1946, which was linked with the movement for the release of the INA men, and the total liberation of India. These details totally contradict the popular belief that the British withdrew from India, because of non-violence. Upadhyay's work points to their beating a hurried retreat, for fear of a large scale revolt in their Indian armed forces. Such a development would have endangered their economic interests which seemed safe in the hands of Congress leaders. "Just after twenty one years of the

efforts of the Gadar Party revolutionaries to spark off a mass uprising with the help of the armed forces in 1915" Upadhyay writes "the rebels of the Royal Indian Navy risked their lives in 1946 and revolted to free India from British slavery. . . . A Central RIN Strike Committee was organised on the evening of February 19th. . . . it met on INS Talwar and elected M.S. Khan as its President. . . . He emphasized the need to maintain unity and it was said. . . . 'Our struggle is against the British imperialism which is behaving with us for the last six years as if we are not humanbeings, but dogs. Our demands are connected with jobs but our aim is freedom of the country. . . . To this end we must pay special attention towards the release of INA prisoners' . . . The meeting echoed slogans like 'Long live Revolution' and 'we won't surrender !' (p. 355 to 360, Vol II).

The widespread impact of the RIN revolt, its association with the demand for release of INA men, and the mass sentiments in its favour, as well as support to the RIN men by a large section of the population, in bringing food and salutations to them, indicated to the British the dangers of a multi-dimensional 1857, which the Indian revolutionaries had aimed at all those years. Ultimately, the British handed over the reigns to the Congress leadership which helped them quell the RIN revolt.

Obviously, the INA struggles outside India and the RIN revolt of 1946 are prima facie raisons d'être for the research institutions connected with history omitting to investigate this most significant aspect of the Indian liberation struggle. Equally obvious is the fact that this canvas is too vast for any one individual author to do it full justice. Nevertheless Upadhyay has done a fine job in recording the history of the Indian revolutionary movement abroad.

His book is a pioneering effort, but more than that its significance lies in its recording for posterity the glory of a nation struggling for its freedom. It also proves beyond any doubt, the dictum that those who rule by the sword, shall perish by the sword as did the British. For it was the same sword they sharpened to keep India in subjugation, which their own POWs as in the case of the INA and armed forces, unsheathed to overthrow their empire.

Akhil Anand

NEWSHOUND



By Rap



You do not have a better choice

Failure On Five Counts

This is the season of annual examinations. In schools and colleges, it is being decided who will be promoted, who held back. In the school of national politics, the most conspicuous result in the year 1986-87 has been the dismal failure of Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister of this country. He has failed on at least five counts. The government and party he heads has failed to honour the Punjab accord. Whatever the alibis and explanations, and in spite of brazen efforts at disinformation, the feeling has spread that the government headed by the present occupant of the prime minister's office, cannot be taken for its word. The accord has become a victim of a trust betrayed.

The second count of failure concerns the most widely publicised part of the P.M.'s programme — to give the country a clean government and, if that should be too tall an order, at least to assure the people that the prime minister himself would remain unsoiled by the dirty stains of political corruption. Rajiv Gandhi has clearly failed his own 'cleanliness test' by not throwing his weight behind his former finance minister's efforts to first investigate and then prevent Indian business houses, multinational companies and ruling party functionaries from plundering and draining the country's economic assets. V.P. Singh offered Rajiv Gandhi a chance to condone a break with established convention of the cabinet's collective responsibility in the larger interest of cleaning up the political process. But after opting to ease him out of office, for not sharing all the details of his strategy with the cabinet, it will not be easy for the prime minister to stop the public from suspecting that the convention of the cabinet's collective responsibility is being misused to protect a corrupt coterie of ministers in the government. It is not that the prime minister hesitates to break convention; the trouble is that he chooses to break the wrong conventions for questionable reasons.

This leads us to the third point in his list of failures. The Rajiv Gandhi-Zail Singh confrontation has also revealed the prime minister in a poor light. He has first been seen to break the established convention, practice and requirement of keeping the president informed about important matters of state, and worse, he has been exposed as having lied to parliament about his dealings with the nation's head of state. Even in his own constituency of supporters, Rajiv Gandhi is today perceived as a purveyor of untruth. This third count of failure has caused extensive damage to the prime minister's credibility as a reliable national leader. Apart from being incompetent, he even lacks honesty and integrity.

As if all this was not enough, the heir to Indira Gandhi's throne has also been guilty of a conscienceless approach to the burning questions of the day. As hundreds perish with hunger in Orissa, he remains unmoved and unconcerned about getting his and the state government to act.

Finally, failure number five. The people of India expect their prime minister to be immune to narrow communal considerations. Especially so in the existing climate of religious and cultural intolerance. Never before was there as much need as there is now to rededicate the Congress party and the Indian state to secularism, cultural pluralism and political federalism to overcome the mistrust and discord of the four years from 1980-84. Not only has Rajiv Gandhi not departed from his mother's vicious political stratagems, but has plunged himself further into communalism. The role of his party in the elections in Kerala and his refusal to act against those who committed mass murder in Delhi and other places in November 1984 show him up not only as a failed national leader, but also an incompetent party manager.

It will do the country no good if a failed prime minister such as the one we have today manages to continue in office for much longer.

Political Paradigms

By Modhumita Mojumdar

I wouldn't call them politicians but political poltergeists. Indeed, the paradigms set by the run-of-the-mill Indian politician are such that the very word, 'politics', has come to acquire an unsavoury flavour in the past 40 years, or ever since India attained independence. None of them would like to be called the professional politician that he or she is. Each one of them is a *desh sevak* or a *samaj sevak* — having dedicated their lives to the service of the nation or the community. And I use the word 'community' in its wider sense, to mean what they would perhaps prefer to call 'society'; community cuts across narrow, sectarian divisions and includes each one of India's 700-million strong population. The older generation politicians now call themselves 'freedom fighters', although, in their time, *rajneeti* (politics) was a term that commanded respect and politics, as a craft, had not become so debased. For them, joining politics had indeed involved making sacrifices, though today, such of the politicians active in the freedom movement as survive seem determined to reap profits accruing to them as a result of their past sacrifices. Nobody, in sum, wants to be known as a professional politician.

Following from this is the trend, most prominent among politicians themselves, of using the term 'politically motivated' in a pejorative sense. Nobody points out to the fact that politics is like any other profession, except that the stakes here are perhaps higher and the period of apprenticeship longer. Just as it is possible for a person to be a good, bad or indifferent doctor, or lawyer or journalist, so also a politician may be a success or a failure, depending not necessarily upon his or her honesty and integrity alone, but also upon the individual's skill and the circumstances in which he finds himself.

Each profession has its own requirements and makes its own demands on the practitioner. So also politics. It is the business of a politician to be politically motivated; else he would be a very poor politician indeed. To be motivated by factors other than those purely political would not only be bad policy but also amount to a betrayal of the profession by one who has made politics his vocation. But, increasingly from the time of Mrs Indira Gandhi, we find politicians themselves, strangely enough, accusing each other of being 'politically motivated', when, in fact, they mean to say venomous, or malicious or underhand. Similarly, I have heard many a seasoned politician describe foul language used anywhere and by anyone at all as 'unparliamentary'.

I am not quibbling with semantics, but, in order not to create confusion, it becomes necessary to know the meaning of words such as 'politics' and 'political', as they occur in any standard dictionary. Currently, the controversy in Parliament



and in the national press, is on whether the office of the President of India is being politicised, and if so by whom. Another charge, that has not been openly hurled but is being loudly whispered in the corridors of power is whether the President, Giani Zail Singh, is playing a political game. The assumption is that the President is, or should be, above politics. And, in their new found zeal, some would also have him be above criticism. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr Balram Jakhar, who, in the past could allow Mr K K Tewary of the Congress-I party, (who has since then been rewarded with the post of a minister,) to hurl the grave charge of hobnobbing with the Punjab extremists, against Giani Zail Singh in the floor of the House, has now said that he will not allow the President's name to be dragged into any controversy even in an indirect form.

'Politics', my dictionary says, means "manoeuvring and intriguing" only in US. Basically, it means "the art or science of government: the management of a political party: political affairs or opinion". A 'politician', then, is "one versed in the science of government: one engaged in political life or statesmanship: one interested in party politics: a politic person". As the head of the state, therefore, the President cannot but be a statesman, a politician. If he were meant to be a mere rubber stamp, as the indefatigable Mr K K Tewary has implied in a recent issue of *The Illustrated Weekly*, then, Rajendra Prasad would never have agreed to become the first President of India. True, the Founding Fathers who framed our Constitution could never have visualised personal pique marring the relations of the Prime Minister and the President, but the Constitution explicitly provides that, at all times, the President should be kept informed on the affairs of the state. The prime responsibility to keep the President so informed lies with the Prime Minister himself.

Whether Giani Zail Singh, who showed abject gratitude to the then Prime Minister upon

being made President, deserves at all to sit in the same chair which men of the eminence of Rajendra Prasad, S Radhakrishnan and Zakir Hussein once adorned, is a matter of opinion. His act in nominating Rajiv Gandhi as prime Minister, without observing the convention of appointing the seniormost Cabinet Minister as interim PM, and flouting the norm by which the leader of the ruling party in Parliament needs to be so elected before, and not after, his being named Prime Minister, is also questionable. But, since he is the President of India, for better or for worse, respect must be shown to him while he holds this exalted office. A Prime Minister is the last person who can flout the Constitutional provisions and the conventions that have been laid down by five other Prime Ministers who, between them, governed the country for 38 years.

The President of India must, of course, be above partisan bias. Zail Singh revealed him as a Congress-I partisan when he appointed Rajiv Gandhi, a nobody in the government, as Prime Minister on the very day that Indira Gandhi was assassinated. He should have been impeached at that point of time for having violated the Constitution. At present, he is perfectly within his rights when he writes to Rajiv Gandhi pointing out his lapses. Indeed, he would be failing in his duty if he did not do so. Zail Singh, for all his fault (as Home Minister he praised Hitler in Parliament, if memory serves right) cannot be blamed for attempting to rise, although belatedly, to the demands of his exalted office.

As for the President being above criticism, nobody in a parliamentary democracy, not even the Queen of England in her country, is above criticism. Moreover, since there is a provision by which the President may be impeached by Parliament, it was obviously not the desire of the framers of the Indian Constitution to place him above criticism in the manner in which the Pope of the Catholic church is. His name, similarly, is not something that is or should be unmentionable anywhere — Balram Jakhar's personal fiefdom not excluded. Indeed, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, like the President of the country, should not only be but be manifestly seen to be fair and even-handed; and, although he is elected with the votes of the ruling party, desist from pulling his weight in order to extricate his political bosses from an awkward situation. In this respect, Jakhar has failed Parliament which represents the nation as a whole. It is, then, politicians of his ilk who have reduced 'politics' to a dirty word in India today.

Latest Extremist 'Crusade' Boomerangs

By Satindra Singh

NEW DELHI, April 4 : The crusade launched by Sikh extremists against drinking and meat-eating in the last fortnight of February is said to have boomeranged. From all accounts it has lost them substantial support among their co-religionists.

Apparently, no doubt, they have won the first round. There were no takers of the liquor vends recently auctioned by the Punjab Government in most of the extremist-infected districts of Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Patiala, Ferozepur and Sangrur. Even in other districts, where these vends were auctioned, successful bidders are finding it difficult to ply their business despite the

official assurance to provide them protection against any outside interference.

But as most of the Punjabis, especially the Jat Sikhs, are avid wine bibbers, they have not taken kindly to the anti-liquor campaign. Although the Sikh Gurus imposed a blanket ban on the consumption of all intoxicants, including liquor, drinking has continued to be an integral part of the Jat Sikhs' way of life. This is apparent from the fact that the tiny state of Punjab heads the per capita liquor consumption in the country.

The educated elite among the Sikhs is reportedly dead set against this campaign because of two main reasons. One is that it will result in the re-emergence

of the illicit brewing of hotch, dreadfully harmful in its effect, and the other is the certainty of a phenomenal increase in drug consumption, which is even more harmful.

There is also a widespread hostile reaction against the extremists' crusade against meat-eating because no Sikh Guru has prohibited its consumption. Secondly, the Sikh theologians fear that return to vegetarianism will ultimately take the Khalsa fraternity back into the Hindu fold.

For their campaign against the sale and consumption of tobacco, the Sikh extremists do have the scriptural sanction and also enjoy a limited measure of support amongst the Sikh masses. But what a majority of the Sikhs seem to want is that the sale and consumption of tobacco should not be in public. Like the sale and consumption of beef it should be done in pri-

vate so as not to hurt their religious susceptibilities.

Reports have also poured in from Batala and Ludhiana that the extremists have started "extorting" money from Sikh industrialists on the plea that they are making "sacrifices for ensuring them complete protection against their more advanced and crafty Hindu counterparts in the proposed Khalistan".

These extortions, too, have once again aroused hostility between the Jat and non-Jat Sikhs because while the extremists generally belong to the former caste, the latter are mostly Ramgarhias, Khatri and Aroras.

This growing schism among the Sikhs cannot but strengthen in the long run the forces of law and order which have been hard put to contain, much less curb, Sikh extremism during the past several years.

Photo Out of Place

This is in reference to your Gazette dated 21.2.87. In it there was an interesting article 'Sikh History and Bhai Vir Singh'. It threw new light on the three novels of Bhai Vir Singh. We would welcome more of such articles. The photograph that was given with the article was very much out of place. It is an informal photograph obviously from someone's private collection and quite out of place in a newspaper. We hope you will appreciate our point of view.

In the other article, "Understanding Sikh Terminology", S. Khushwant Singh has written, "A fifth Takht where the Guru's two sons were martyred was added to the list". As far as our knowledge goes the fifth Takht is Damdama Sahib in Sabo Ke Talwandi (Bhatinda). It is not connected with the martyred of the Sahibzadas. At this Takht Guru Gobind Singhji got the first copy of Guru Granth Sahib completed. This Takht is also known as the University of the Sikhs. We would be grateful if you would throw more light on this subject.

Yours faithfully

Mrs. Unal Sukhpal Singh
V & P.O. Doraba
Distt. Ludhiana

the payment of proper minimum wages to these workers. But the big challenge before LAS and the entire legal process is how to ensure the proper implementation of this order. As observers rightly pointed out at a meeting of LAS called to discuss this issue, in the absence of organisational work within the migrant workers, this can prove to be a very difficult task. As the migration season is coming to an end in May it is necessary to mobilise widespread public opinion in favour of securing the rights of these workers so that some benefits can accrue to the workers during the present season itself.

However, in the long run, efforts to mobilise the workers not only at the working place but also in the villages from where they come are necessary to secure their rights.

Sugar Cane Workers Demand Just Wages In Gujarat Exploitation In the Cooperative Sector

Bharat Dogra

Lok Adhikar Sangh (LAS- People's Rights Organisation) a civil rights organisation of Gujarat has a rich tradition of well-organised, well argued social action litigation cases on behalf of workers and other deprived sections. The Sangh is at present deeply involved in improving the incredibly bad working conditions of sugarcane workers seasonally employed in the Surat and Valsad districts of Gujarat. For harvesting the cane these workers migrate here from Nasik and Dhuliya Districts of Maharashtra, and Dangs and other southern districts of Gujarat.

This case promises to be one of the most significant of its kind in India. It involves the search for justice of nearly 1.6 lakh workers, not from one or two companies or government agencies, but from the very large number of farmers who form the basis of the so-called co-operative sugarcane factories in Gujarat. It is also an example of an organisation which surmounts regional feeling-the workers are mostly from Maharashtra while the employers are mostly Gujaratis-but it is a Gujarat based organisation which is fighting on behalf of the workers against the employers.

Development In Unequal Setting

Lastly it assumes special significance in the context of recent development debates about the impact of big development projects on the weaker sections in an unequal setting. Sugarcane cultivation was made possible here by the construction of big dams. However, the people displaced by the dams were not properly rehabilitated and many of these pauperised people became the source of cheap labour for cane harvesting.

Thus the dam provided not only irrigation but also cheap

labour to facilitate the further development of already better-off people at the expense of the most deprived sections. Equally important is the fact that this case also exposes the hollowness of the so-called co-operative sector.

As in past social action litigation cases involving LAS, committed academics and to a lesser extent journalists have played a most helpful role. Public attention to the plight of these workers was initially highlighted by the writings of Jan Breman, a scholar known as much for his painstaking research, as for his deep commitment to the cause of the oppressed. His detailed work on the subject as well as some recent reports by journalists prompted LAS to file a petition in the High Court to protect the interests of workers regarding minimum wages and related issues.

In its order dated January 7 this year the High Court asked a committee to enquire into the conditions of these workers. The committee visited various habitations of workers, several farmers and also two sugar factories, (the Bardoli factory and the Chalthan factory) to make its inquiries. On the basis of these visits and discussions, the

committee has already submitted an interim report of its findings.

This report has concluded that "the working and living conditions of the migrant labourers engaged in Surat and Valsad districts are well below the expected standards and unjust by any meaning of the term. The committee emphatically concludes that there are most serious breaches of labour legislation both in the case of inter-state migrants brought mainly from 'Khandesh' region (Dhulia, Jalgaon districts and a part of Nasik district) of Maharashtra and the intra-state migrants coming from Dangs, Valsad and Surat districts within Gujarat.

Destitute Living Conditions

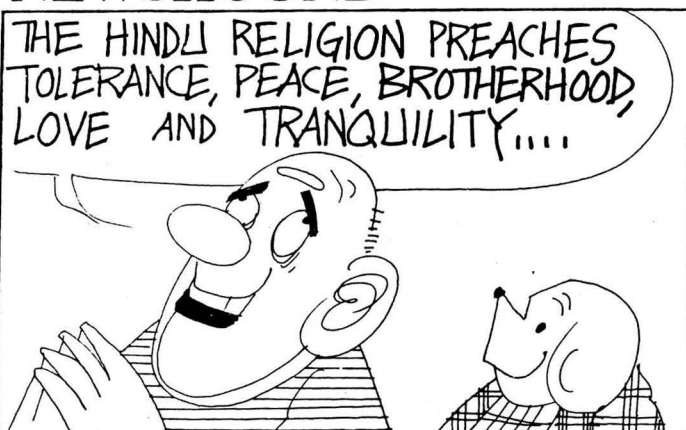
The committee found the housing structure formed by mats and bamboos by these workers to be so small that only children can sleep there while others have to find shelter in the open, even though the harvesting season includes the winter months. They frequently have to drink dirty water due to non-availability of clean drinking water. For the committee members it was obvious that the

workers live in total destitution without even the minimum amenities. . . Apart from the lack of physical amenities, severe nutritional deficiency affects all members of the worker-families including children, pregnant and nursing mothers and the sick. Without a single exception, the workers were found to survive on a roti made up of Jowar and a chutney made only of red chillies and salt for the entire season.

As for the payment of wages, the committee found that there is a clear breach of the minimum Wages Act, 1970 in almost all the cases of approximately one and a half lakhs of sugarcane harvesting workers. "In the case of the Bardoli factory for instance, the committee concluded that the average wage earned by each worker per day ranges between roughly Rs5 to Rs6 against the legally fixed minimum wage for harvesting workers of Rs 11 per day per person. Further, the mode of payment is evolved in such a way as to ensure the availability of assured labour force till the end of the season.

On the basis of the report, the High Court has given orders for

NEWSHOUND



By Rap

Nagpal's T.V. Success Story

Nandika Jaitly

The boom in the television industry in recent years, marks an interesting course on a graph. Tracing its development, television made a modest start in 1970, with two companies in the small-scale sector and two in the large-scale, producing black and

other is his motto: "Quality". For this he spares no pain and spends almost 10 hours in his Delhi factory every day. On his weekly day off he visits his dealers and offices, advertising his television the best way: personally.

In 1982, when licenses were

the fact is that with an improvement in the programmes, the demand for TV sets could also go up.

His other grouse against Doordarshan is the phenomenal cost of advertising. From the 1st a 10 second advertisement will Rs 10,000!!!

import policy by Mr Gandhi's government is a mixed blessing. For the small-scale sector this policy entails increased competition from foreign makes. Yet it makes it easier for them to import technology and components from abroad. Mr Nagpal for one would rather compete with the foreign companies than do without the import policy!

The only way to fight this anomalous situation is by attempting to change Indian perceptions that 'phoren mal' is good. This change can be brought about by the dealers, who have a one to one relationship with their customers. Indian television is as good as any other primarily because the entire set is made with Japanese technology and components at the international level. Also foreign televisions cost 30% more than the Indian ones, plus an Indian company is in a position to offer quicker and better service and at a minimal cost.

Fully Indian Sets Possible In Five Years

"At present the imported content is high, but it is bound to decrease when better Indian components are made available", observes Mr. Nagpal. He predicts that within the next five years India will be in a position to produce a completely Indian television set. "We are still at the assembling stage, but once the industry starts producing parts we can take the next step forward. It is important that the manufacturer be convinced of the reliability and quality of the components and that their cost be maintained at the international

market level to negate any rise in prices.

The government could lend a helping hand by floating loans and subsidies and by abolishing all taxes on televisions. With 180 TV stations in the whole of India and 70% of the population being covered by TV, the salvation of the television industry lies in the hands of the middle-class. To bring the cost of the sets down to the income and price-bracket of the middle-classes, it is necessary to abolish heavy excise and custom duty which pushes, up the sales tax and thus increases the cost. Another measure could be the introduction of the 'hire-purchase' system on an interest-free basis, so that people could buy televisions in instalments.

Mr Nagpal feels that the TV boom is good not only for the television industry but also for the component industry. A colour TV uses more than 4000 components. As the TV industry grows, so will the component industry. The future of television in India, says Mr Nagpal, very bright. So far only one million sets have been produced in about 18 months and the expected demand for 1990 is estimated at 10 million sets.

A last word of advice before signing off. Our television expert would like to warn all prospective buyers not to get taken in by 'excellent' deals such as offers to exchange black and white television sets with colour ones with an additional nominal charge. These are crooked deals through which the dealers wish to evade sales tax and correspondingly palm off fake sets on unsuspecting customers.



white sets. As this industry required efficient after-sales service, the big companies slowly faded out and the small sector dominated. Since then the TV industry has come a long way. It was only a few years ago, in 1982, that the government first issued licenses for the production of colour TVs. The Asiad in 1984, gave this nascent industry the required impetus and since then production has escalated at a frightening pace. Once again, after a slump in 1985-86, TV manufacturers are looking forward to a profitable 1987, with the world championships in cricket coming up.

The number of companies, big and small, which have proliferated during these years, is mind-boggling. Most of them are congregated together and a major concentration can be found in the Naraina Industrial Area. One such small-scale unit, tucked away in a corner of Naraina, claims to produce one of the best quality TV sets in India. **Mr. S.S. Nagpal, the Managing Director of Kingston TV, has been the 'electrifying' factor behind the 'sets'.**

Strictly believing in a 'one-man' show and literally in 'smallscale', Mr Nagpal started his career by assembling transistors at home, with the help of two technicians. In 1966, portable radios were introduced and Mr Nagpal switched to these. He raised his production from 100 units per month in 1966 to 5000 in 1970.

Two distinguishing features underlie Mr Nagpal's illustrious career in the electronics field. One is his ability to stay one step ahead of the others; the

issued for the manufacture of colour TVs, Kingston was one of the first 14 companies in the field. His unit slowly expanded from 2 to 20 workers and he moved into a small factory. "The components in these days, came from Korea and I found them to be of a very low quality. Since 'customer satisfaction' is my guiding principle, I could not carry on producing sets which would land on the rubbish heap a year later", says Mr Nagpal. Thus began the search for foreign technology and assistance. Kingston received know-how and components from Toshiba, a Japanese firm. Together they received the first prize for the best quality television sets from the Small Industries Service Institute.

As Mr Nagpal puts it, "I always consider it worthwhile being innovative and giving customers their money's worth, therefore I am game for any new invention which can improve upon my TVs". Thus last year, Kingston produced their latest model, the 3 system TV adaptable to any video.

For a man so wrap up in television, Mr Nagpal hardly sits in front of the box. His opinion on the programmes on Doordarshan is not very complimentary. "The good programmes are between 9.00 and 10.00 p.m. There should be a drastic improvement in the quality of the programmes by getting in fresh talent from the film industry and outside. The Information and Broadcasting Ministry should set up a separate wing to deal with the production of serials. At the same time they should not hesitate to get good foreign serials." This is not merely altruism speaking. For

Energetic Travel Programme

Mr Nagpal has a travel programme which keeps him on the road for 15 to 20 days in a month. Surprisingly, his largest market is in south India. There are 80 assistants and servicers in Bangalore and Madras alone. "It is necessary to ensure that the wants of my customers are properly fulfilled and that they do not suffer in any way. Thus I make it a point to travel every month to all the outlets outside Delhi."

The liberalisation of the

HINDUSTAN REFRIGERATION STORES 2 & 4, NETAJI SUBHASH MARG, DARYAGANJ, NEW DELHI - 110 002.

Phones: 271152 & 271898 (PBX)
277725 & 277735

Res: 521273 & 522852
Cable: CORKMAN

AUTHORISED DEALERS:

- * Kirloskar Hermetic Compressors
- * American Universal Electric Motors, Monoblock Pumps,
- * Danfoss Controls & Switches
- * Renitrol Controls and Relays
- * Freon Refrigerants
- * Venus Water Heaters
- * Tullu Water Pumps
- * Cutler Hammer Thermostats & Switchgear
- * Acmevac Vacuum Pumps
- * KIM Brass, Steel fittings & Valves

STOCKISTS & MFRS. OF:

- * Dry Ice & Liquid CO₂
- * Liquid Ammonia
- * Ammonia Valves & Compressors
- * Copper Tubing
- * Deep Freezers
- * Combination Coolers
- * Ice Lolly & Cream Plants
- * Water & Brine Chillers
- * Dehumidifiers
- * Igloo Churners
- * Soft Ice Cream Dispensers
- * Sulphur Dioxide

UDHAM SINGH — PATRIOT MARTYR

Harindra Singh

Information on Udham Singh comes from three important sources: oral evidence, archival material and a personal collection. Swaran Singh and Inder Singh Murari of Barath Sahib near Pathankot, who were connected with the Gurdaspur conspiracy case in the early 1930s, came to know

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre is to the Indians what the Fall of the Bastille is to the French, the watershed in the fight for liberty. On April 13, 1919, thousands of men, women and children had gathered in the Bagh, a public park surrounded by high walls and tenements, to register their protest against the enactment of the Rowlatt Act, appropriately nick-named the "Black Act". In subsequent testimony the Bagh was described as "resembling a very large swimming-bath with perpendicular sides." According to Winston Churchill, "the crowd was not armed, except with bludgeons, and it was not attacking anybody or anything."

However, Brigadier-General Reginald Edward Harry Dyer rushed to the scene, with 65 Gurkha and 25 Baluchi soldiers. Just once there was a warning shout for the crowd to disperse. But there was no way out past his troopers who blocked the exit. The order was given: "Fire!" and 90 marksmen blazed away, point-blank. The General later testified that he ordered "Cease Firing" only "when my ammunition was almost exhausted." By then, 381 men, women and children had been killed, and more than 1200 wounded.

Wounded Lay Unattended

Dyer marched his men back to the barracks, leaving the dead and wounded where they lay. Later, he admitted that he would have continued the attack "but for the restricted space." His purpose "was to strike terror into the whole of the Punjab." To this end, he considered it essential to show no sign of weakness by giving aid to the wounded. He further ordered that all Indians, of whatever status, should be made to crawl in order to pass through a lane in Amritsar, where an English lady had allegedly been assaulted by some unidentified persons.

Though the tramping of nailed boots and the booming of the Empire's guns died out within 15 minutes, the pre-

Udham Singh personally. It is not certain whether or not Udham Singh was present in Jallianwala Bagh at the time of the massacre but he appears to have personally witnessed the aftermath. Swaran Singh states that in 1932 Udham Singh used to recall the episode with anger and pain.

cincts of the Bagh, littered with the dead and the dying, echoed for hours with the piteous cries of the victims of the indiscriminate killing. The ruthless, unprovoked murder of 381 innocent, defenceless persons shocked the country. It shook the great edifice of the British empire in India to its very foundations, and sounded the death knell of British rule. The faith of Indians in British decency, justice and fairness was as dead as those who were Dyer's targets in Jallianwala Bagh.

The idea of the merciless massacre, perpetrated by General Dyer, was conceived by the then Lt Governor of Punjab, Sir Michael O' Dwyer, and worked out by top British bureaucrats and military brass at Government House in Lahore.

The Nationalist Movement Changes

Until then, the national movement under Mahatma Gandhi had been certain that the British would "reward" Indians suitably for helping them in their hour of trial, that is, during World War I. Even Gandhi was shocked out of his pious hopes by the mass massacre on that 'Black' Baisakhi Day. Many other nationalists also burned with indignation. Among them was Udham Singh. "Living in the Punjab was a boy in his teens. He heard about the indignities inflicted on his people and the shooting in Jallianwala Bagh. He became enraged against the British and did not forget." Thus writes Rupert Furneaux, a contemporary historian.

This brave son of Punjab was born on December 5, 1900, at Sunam in the former State of Patiala. His father, Tehal Singh, was an ordinary peasant. Like others of his class, he barely managed to eke out a living from the land. Udham's mother had died in his infancy. Finding himself at the end of his tether, Tehal Singh migrated to Amritsar in search of a living, but soon



S. Udham Singh who was hanged in London for shooting Sir Michael O'Dwyer

after arriving in the city he died. His death signalled trouble for Udham and his younger brother. Left to fend for themselves, the two brothers somehow got themselves admitted to the Central Khalsa Yatimkhana (orphanage) at Putlighar, Amritsar.

At the orphanage, Udham — hungry for education, avidly picked up odd bits of knowledge from varied sources. But it was all too little for his curious and questing mind, and spirit. He started frequenting the rendezvous of revolutionaries in and around Amritsar to learn more.

In the early 1920s, Udham left for the United States of America in his quest for knowledge. By this time he had fallen under the spell of the Ghadar Party. In the U.S.A., he established contacts with its leaders and enrolled himself as a member. In 1927, he paid a brief visit to Amritsar. His stay there was far from uneventful. Soon after his arrival, he found himself in the police lock-up. According to the First Information Report lodged with the Amritsar Kotwali Police Station, two pistols (one loaded and the other unloaded), 140 cartridges and large quantities of Ghadarite literature were seized from his possession.

Udham was released in the early 1930s. He immediately left for America as he found existence in India too suffocating politically. In 1936, he again returned to India on a "special mission", but the exact nature

of his mission is not known. When World War II broke out in September, 1939, Udham hurriedly packed and left for the United Kingdom. First he stayed with Babu Karam Singh Cheema at Coventry. But in 1940 he moved to London. Babu Karam Singh Cheema later confided that throughout his stay with him, Udham was in a state of constant animation and seemed "possessed". His diaries of the years 1939 and 1940 reveal what was uppermost in his mind. The first entry in a bold hand reads: "Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Sunnay Bank, South Devon".

In London, Udham's first concern was somehow to find his way into higher society and into aristocratic circles. His outlandish appearance and tenacity of purpose stood him in good stead. An unusual figure soon came to be much sought after amongst the elite. However, the long awaited opportunity, a wait which was driving him to desperation, came his way at long last on March 13, 1940. The Royal Central Asian Society and the East India Association organised a joint function to be presided over by Lord Zetland, a former Governor of Bombay. Sir Michael O'Dwyer of Jallianwala Bagh notoriety, was to be one of the speakers.

On that fateful day Udham went to the meeting. He pushed his way to the front row. Just as the meeting was drawing to a close, he rose in his seat, whipped out his revolver, and fired two bullets at Sir Michael O'Dwyer from point blank range. The man responsible for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre collapsed on the spot, killed instantaneously. After firing two more shots at Lord Zetland, Udham attempted to escape. But he was overpowered by some members of the audience.

Next morning, when he was produced before the magistrate, Udham gave his name as Ram Mohammed Singh Azad, to emphasize the unity of the

three major communities of India — Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs — and their common desire to be free from British thrall. Questioned about his motive for committing the "crime", Udham declared: "I did it because I had a grudge against him." Thus, in a veiled form he referred to the heinous crime that the former Lt Governor had committed in India in 1919.

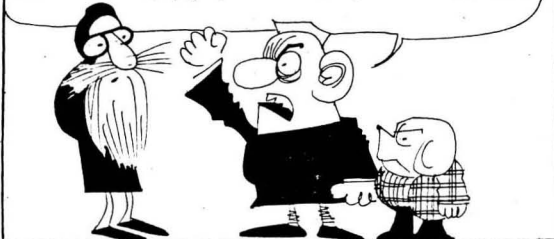
Udham's attitude towards the court was of total indifference. His feelings, rarely voiced during the trial, are worth recording: "I have seen people starving in India under British imperialists. I am not sorry for protesting. It was my duty to do so just for the sake of my country." On another occasion, he said: "I do not mind dying. What is the use of waiting until you grow old? You want to die when you are young. That's good. That's what I'm doing. I am dying for my country."

As an undertrial, Udham went on hunger strike for 42 days to protest against his ill-treatment in jail. Indian residents in Britain sought permission to see him. The request was refused. The permission was not granted even after he had been sentenced to death and was awaiting execution. On July 31, 1940, Udham was surreptitiously hanged in Pentville Prison. His body was not handed over to his friends in Britain, nor was it sent to his relatives in India.

Udham's martyrdom is a rare example of self-sacrifice. He could not and did not forget the sense of national humiliation and distress at the mass massacre of the innocents for over two decades. The man guilty of this inhuman crime, had, in the meantime, retired to the idyllic English countryside to lead a quiet life — not expecting any punishment for his "black act." But Udham Singh belied Sir Michael O'Dwyer's hope of escape from retribution for the sin he had committed against humanity. ●

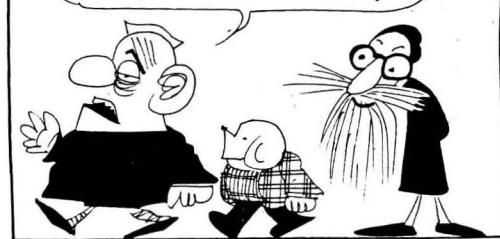
NEWSHOUND

MR BARNALA, YOU ARE GUTLESS, SPINELESS AND POLITICALLY IMPOTENT...



By Rap

..THAT'S WHY WE MUST SUPPORT YOU AS CM!



INTERNATIONAL ROUND-UP

By Partha S Banerjee

Paris-Moscow Rift: Tit-For-Tat Diplomacy

For the French media, it was the best story in months. After the secret service uncovered an alleged Soviet spy ring snooping on the French high-tech Ariane rocket motor factory in Normandy, northern France, a series of investigative media reports dug out sensational details of how the Soviet embassy in Paris ran the network. On Thursday (April 2), premier Jacques Chirac, returning from a trip to Washington, ordered the expulsion of three Soviet diplomats apparently involved in the spy scandal, an action that expectedly provoked Moscow to retaliate with expulsion of six French diplomats. The tit-for-tat expulsions threatened to worsen relations between the two countries, and at an especially inopportune moment since premier Chirac is scheduled to visit Moscow next month.

The Ariane spy ring was exposed last month when the French secret service took into custody five French officials with access to sensitive information about the rocket base. One of the officials had a Russian-born wife, another a Roumanian (Roumania is a pro-Soviet country) mistress, who apparently revealed the entire operation. French media reports linked the spy ring to the Soviet embassy in Paris and one Russian diplomat widely mentioned was air attache Valeri Komorev.

When Chirac returned from Washington, he was handed a dossier on the investigations conducted by DSP, the French counter-espionage agency. French officials confirmed to reporters that if the evidence in the dossier was convincing, expulsions would follow. Moscow, of course, reacted strongly to the French charges and denied any involvement of its Paris embassy in the spy ring. The Kremlin described the French allegations as "groundless and unfriendly." The Russian media reported that the Soviet-born woman, arrested in connection with the spy ring, was being ill-treated by the French police and observers saw Moscow's belligerent stand as reflective of the Kremlin's new style under Gorbachev 'to counter-attack when under pressure'.

The situation worsened as the week progressed with Paris announcing it was interrogating three other Soviet diplomats and Moscow alleging that French naval aircraft in the Mediterranean had acted in a provocative fashion by flying close to a Soviet cargo ship. The incident, according to the Soviet official news agency, Tass, occurred off the naval port of Toulon on Friday (April 3).

Finally, on Saturday, the Soviet foreign ministry announced it was expelling six French diplomats for involving "in activities incompatible with their status". The term usually applied to spying.

The Paris-Moscow diplomatic row is expected to have an impact on East-West relations especially since Chirac is due in the Soviet Union next month. The French had always prided themselves in having a special relationship with Kremlin, but recent developments certainly do not augur well for that exclusive tie.

Meanwhile, the US-Soviet ties suffered a small setback last fortnight from another spy scandal, this one in Moscow. Five American Marines guarding the US embassy in Moscow have been charged with allowing Soviet experts to enter the building and snoop on secret files and codes. The damage is reportedly very big, and the CIA will have to re-establish virtually from scratch its network in Moscow and work out new codes. The Marines were allegedly tempted by female agents into letting the Soviet only has the scandal shocked the US, America's West European penetration, and procedures of recruitment of embassy guards will probably be reviewed in all Western capitals.

CHILE: The Pope in Pinochet's Fiefdom

John Paul II, the most widely travelled pope ever, could hardly have been in agreement with his host last week. Soon after the pontiff's traditional gesture of kissing the ground as he disembarked at Chile's airport, President Augusto Pinochet was telling him that his Latin American country was the victim of an "international attack by the most extreme terrorist and atheist ideology ever known to humanity." Said the autocratic ruler: "You, your Holiness, can appreciate this like few others."

The pope only replied that he had come on a religious visit and also to "proclaim the inalienable dignity of man." But earlier in his trip, talking to journalists, he had described General Pinochet as a dictator and said the Church would die if it did not speak out on human rights abuse in Chile. He also said that the Chilean clergymen should play the same role as their counterparts in the Phi-

lippines, where the Church helped Corazon Aquino to topple the dictatorial Marcos government.

Not surprisingly, Pinochet was a little unhappy when the Vatican announced the papal visit to Chile and there was pressure from his military government on the Church to restrain the pontiff from speaking about human rights and Santiago's economic policies. The Church of course maintained that it was part of the pope's mission to speak out on such matters.

And as anticipated, the papal tour touched off widespread violence in the country. Outside the Santiago cathedral, where the pope's motorcade made its first stop, anti-government demonstrators clashed with security forces and hundreds and thousands of Chileans who had packed the streets to greet the pontiff rushed for shelter to the back alleys. On Friday (April 3), at his last public appearance in Santiago, serious violence erupted as the pope was celebrating an open-air mass to beatify a nun. Several hundred youth, armed with staves, hurled stones at the crowd and one violent group charged towards the press enclosure. Several journalists were injured, one photographer seriously wounded and panic and pandemonium prevailed. The security forces used water canons and tear gas to restore order.

The official television channel blamed the trouble on "communist provocateurs". The pope himself condemned violence from "whatever quarter", and there was loud applause when he mentioned Chile's "democratic tradition" in a call for political reconciliation. Chile indeed has had a long democratic tradition, longer than almost any country outside Europe and North America. But on September 11, 1973 that tradition was brutally snuffed out.

Backed, ironically, by the world's strongest democracy, the United States, Pinochet's military commanders toppled the elected communist government of Salvador Allende and proclaimed martial law. The press was gagged, political parties banned and tens of thousands of people jailed, tortured and executed. Initially, most Chileans, disenchanted with Allende's troubled rule, welcomed Pinochet's coup, but as the economy crashed and

repression reached new heights, there were angry demonstrations in the streets.

US president, Jimmy Carter (1977-81), outraged by Pinochet's tyranny, cut all aid to the country and voted against World Bank and the International Monetary Fund loans. By 1983, five opposition parties had come together under the Democratic Alliance and the demonstrations became more frequent. The country's most powerful churchman, Juan Francisco Cardinal Fresno, playing much the same role that the Philippines' Cardinal Sin played last year, brought all opposition groups and parties (except the communists) under one banner and signed in 1985 the National Accord for a Transition to Full Democracy.

Pinochet, of course, has dismissed the Accord as a scrap of paper, but opposition to his rule is growing every day. If he had hoped that the pope's visit would give his government a legitimacy certificate, he was sorely disappointed. With Pope John Paul II strongly criticising the government, Pinochet's gamble, as London's Guardian put it, has quite failed.

UNITED STATES The beginning of a new era

It was a bad week again for President Ronald Reagan. After the Senate voted to override his veto on the Highways bill, a sub-committee of the House of Representatives voted to cut his budget request for his controversial strategic defence initiative programme, popularly called Star Wars. The subcommittee agreed to give him only two-thirds of the \$ 5000 million he asked for, and even deeper

cuts are promised when the full House considers the request.

"The moment when Ronald Reagan finally lost the power to win hearts and minds on Capitol Hill", was how one correspondent summed up the president's Thursday (April 2) defeat over the Highways Bill. (Capitol Hill, in Washington DC, is where the American Congress buildings are located). Other observers called it the turning point of the Reagan presidency and the beginning of a new era. For, the President's defeat was a result apparently of a significant number of his own partymen, the Republicans, voting against him.

The Highways Bill proposed spending \$80,000 million on new roads, bridges and other politically popular projects that ensure more jobs and economic development and of course, more votes for politicians who endorse it. Reagan, however, vetoed the bill, saying it was "overspending of the worst kind". Thirteen Republicans opposed that veto and the president's last minute efforts to win them over came to no avail. They told him, as it were, that though he was not standing for re-election next year, they were.

The House arms services subcommittee's vote next day only cutting Star Wars funds made matters worse for the President. It was the reflection of the mood at Capitol Hill and a warning of the many battles to follow in Congress over military funding that Reagan is expected to face in the forthcoming months. The White House apparently is greatly disturbed by the trends and the presidential spokesman, Marlin Fitzwater said of the vote: "We feel that these actions undercut our negotiators at the arms control talks and reduce our leverage with the Soviet Union." (NEWS-CRIP)

The Forum Gazette

Part time Sub-editors, required. Only those with a fluent command of the English language need apply.

We are also looking for artists to illustrate stories, satire and humour.

Also required photographic material from freelance photographers and photo agencies.

NEWSHOUND



By Rap

The Vigil of Two Wives

The wives of Prakash Singh Badal and Simranjit Singh Mann are keeping vigil in Chandigarh. The *Forum Gazette* visited them there. This is not a political report. It is a report on how the Indian Republic, which prides itself on being known internationally as 'the world's largest democracy' treats its political prisoners. During the Emergency, we heard with horror about how Jai Prakash Narayan was 'looked after' by the Indira Gandhi regime. Are the conditions under which Simranjit Singh Mann surviving, any better?

My husband has been in solitary confinement ever since he was arrested in early December," Mrs Prakash Singh Badal, told this correspondent when she met her last week in her Chandigarh home. The Akali leader and former chief minister of Punjab is in Jubalpur jail, not a pleasant place according to his letters to Mrs Badal. He has rats and mosquitos for company and has not been allowed to meet his family members, with one exception, in the past four and a half months. "He was picked up from his house at 2 a.m.," Mrs Badal said, "and yet they say they arrested him in Ropar. Why do they lie about this? Why are they keeping him in jail?" Until recently, the Akali leader was allowed only a local newspaper but now he is allowed to receive a national daily and two magazines. Letters from and to the family take six weeks to receive, going from one city to another through various censors. He is not allowed a radio.

Courageous and controlled, Mrs Badal expressed her indignation at the treatment meted out to her husband. "He has always been a nationalist. You know his past. He is a strong man. But why do they go on keeping him there?"

For Gita Simranjit Singh Mann, it is a very different situation. Somewhere in her thirties, she looks tired and sad, the dark circles under her eyes betraying the tension under which she has lived for the past three years. She is waiting out time in her parents-in-law's house, with a large police tent pitched across the road for surveillance. When her husband was first taken to Bharatpur jail, she told me, he was kept in solitary confinement, in a small cell, never allowed anywhere, not allowed outside for any reason. Food was given to him there, and a small hole in the floor served as a toilet. "He had only a sweater and in winter it was very cold. But he was given no bedding or clothing. He slept on a concrete slab." This continued for three weeks.

Torture And Severe Beatings

The former police officer was tortured by electric shocks and severe beatings, his wife confirmed, and sometime during this period his jaw was either broken or badly damaged. A tooth infection set in then and has been his constant companion since. "They would not take the tooth out for all these months and kept on treating him with some sort of antibiotics. We were not allowed to send him any medicine. They gave him medicine but this did not seem to work and the infection kept spreading till it reached the bone." Gita went on to say that in spite of numerous applications to the jail authorities asking that Mann's jaw be X-rayed, no X-ray was ever taken. But the infected tooth was finally removed, recently. Although she did not say so, others have reported that Mann is in indifferent health because of the prolonged infection and medication.

For over a year now he has been in the notorious Bhagalpur jail. When he was first taken there he was confined in a cell with a lunatic prisoner. Gita related how on the first day the lunatic merely kept on asking whether his fellow inmate had a "first class ticket?". But in the evening he defecated on the floor of the

cell and picked up the faeces and threw them at Mann, spoiling his clothes and person. For three days Mann asked the authorities to allow him to clean up and change his clothes, a request agreed to only on the third day, when he was moved to another cell.

Mann's Medication Withheld

A high-blood pressure patient for many years preceding his incarceration, Mann is supposed to take one particular pill every day. But his wife says that at times, for a week at a time, this medication is withheld by the authorities. There is reason for Gita's tension it appears. However, he is allowed visits from his family regularly and she met him about a month ago. His parents have just been to Bhagalpur to see him. At the end of 1986, charges were finally laid against him and the four transporters who were crossing into Nepal with him when they were arrested. He is now charged with conspiracy to bribe, with waging war against the State and spreading communal disaffection.

"But all he did was write to the President telling him how he felt," Gita claims, adding that this is the right of everyone.

He is now allowed to walk around in the courtyard outside his cell, a courtyard surrounded by a very high wall. In the beginning, he was not allowed this facility. He is still not allowed to have a transistor radio. "They say that if a small part is changed, then it can be used as a transmitter," Gita explained, and with a little smile added, "They don't realise that he knows nothing about

these things. Whenever there was anything to be done, to be repaired, it was I who did it. And who would he transmit to?"

Fears About His Safety

Before our meeting, I had been told that fears have been expressed about Mann's safety, lest he be eliminated in a mysterious 'encounter'. Gita did not mention any such fear but she related two mysterious incidents in recent weeks when, in the middle of the night, without any reason, jail authorities created a commotion, woke up the four transporters who are lodged in what is called the 'camp jail', and asked where was Simranjit Singh Mann? Had they seen him? He had 'disappeared' and could not be found. Each time it was eventually admitted that Mann was safe in his cell. "How could he possibly get out?" Gita asked. But why all this commotion? These two incidents are causing a certain concern to the family, as indeed they should to those who believe in law and justice and human rights. I asked Gita if Mann had signed the papers before nomination to the Rajya Sabha year, pledging loyalty to the Constitution of India, and she said he had indeed. As I was leaving, the Manns's young daughter, in her school uniform — she is thirteen — came in through the door, and I recalled that the last time Gita and I had met, many years ago, she had been a carefree schoolgirl, her life very different from her daughter's at this time. That was another time, and for Gita, another world.

Harji Malik

"MILKFED"

PRODUCERS OF

"VERKA" & "AMBER"

Delicious and Nutritious
DAIRY Products

- | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| * PURE DESI GHEE | * KAJU PINNI | * SWEETENED FLAVOURED MILK |
| * TABLE BUTTER | * PANEER | * LASSI |
| * SKIMMED MILK POWDER | * ICE CREAM POWDER | * ICE CREAM |
| * WHOLE MILK POWDER | * HIGH FAT MILK | * MILK CAKE |
| * BABY FOOD | * STANDARDISED MILK | * PEDA |
| * INFANT MILK FOOD | * TONNED MILK | * YOGHURT |
| * PROCESSED CHEESE | | * CHEESE SINGLES |

IN CONSUMER AND BULK PACKING

The Punjab State Cooperative Milk Producers' Federation Limited,
S.C.O. 3015-16, Sector 22-D, CHANDIGARH.

The Fairfax Fracas . . .

Continued from page, col 2

Besides Ambani and Reliance, VP Singh had initiated investigations, without publicising the fact, into the affairs of Campa Cola magnate and ex-Congress-I MP Charanjit Singh, Scindia Steamship and its chairman Sumati Morarjee and some of the export-oriented companies of Aditya Birla and Ratan Tata. After taking on the biggest business magnates, VP Singh had, with his trusted aides, Bhure Lal and Vinod Pande (both now kicked upstairs), turned the ministry's attention to politicians. Recently, Dharam Chand Jain, former Rajya Sabha member, was raided by the enforcement directorate and a Swiss bank account found in

his name.

Obviously, VP Singh was implementing in letter and spirit what Rajiv, the Mr Clean, was mouthing in public that nobody would be spared in the government's drive to clean up public life. But, when VP Singh reportedly went to Rajiv Gandhi with a list of political and industrial bigwigs he would like to have raided, the prime minister apparently drew a line. Within days, VP Singh was defence minister and the file with the list of 'raidable' names remained with Rajiv.

The question that has everybody exercised is, how many

names are common on the 'raidable' list lying with Rajiv Gandhi and the brief given to the Fairfax Group Incorporated? While Fairfax chief, Michael Hershman has so far only mentioned investigations into Ambani's Reliance and has remained non-committal on discoveries his detectives may have made while on the job, the rumour that Amitabh was the via media between Rajiv Gandhi and Ambani has only served to strengthen suspicions that there is more than meets the eye about the Bachchan brothers.

CBI Dents Government Image

Hectic and contradictory efforts by the government in the last week to confuse the issue in Parliament have not helped refurbish its credibility. The minister of state for finance, Brahm Dutt's vehement denial that the government had not

hired the detective agency but was only using Fairfax as an 'informer', is not only a contradiction of its earlier stand but had promptly been denied by Fairfax chief, Hershman, who is insisting that his agency has been employed by the finance ministry 'with the full backing of the Indian government...we have been given to understand.' The forged letters from Fairfax that the CBI used during Gurumurthy's arrest have further dented the government's image. And all this has come immediately after President Zail Singh quite clearly expressed his disapproval of the government and its leader, Rajiv Gandhi's style of functioning.

The greatest danger to the two-and-a-half-year-old Rajiv government is today posed by the President. If the home ministry officials are to be believed, Zail Singh is today in posses-

sion of the most incriminating documents, the Fairfax reports, thanks to Indian Express. And this may well be the trump card that the President has up his sleeve. If VP Singh joins the Zail bandwagon along with the powerful Indian Express, then there are bleak days ahead for the Rajiv government. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Balram Jharkar is already under fire and indications are that the prime minister will be made the next target. Rumour mills are humming: Rajiv is seeking a rapprochement with the president; Zail Singh is still unhappy as the prime minister has not apologised for slighting him over the last two years in his letter of explanation; VP Singh is resigning; and so on and so forth. The forthcoming months promise to be a very hot, uncomfortable summer for the Rajiv government. (NEWSSCRIPT)

300 Starvation Deaths

Continued from page 1, col 5

failed, famine followed and the Government's much touted food-for-work plan as well as other anti-poverty schemes remained only on paper. Besides, Kalahandi's labourers being exploited by scrupulous contractors, who are in cahoots with the administration. No minimum wages or hours of work are agreed upon, and this nexus only aggravates the already grim situation.

The public distribution system in Kalahandi is conspicuous by its absence. And while there is a shortage of life-saving drugs, even if they had been plentiful, the purchasing power is simply non-existent. The government's regulations lay down that there should be at least one fair-price shop for every 1,000 persons in scheduled areas to ensure regular supply of essential commodities. While in Lanjigarh block, for instance, the administration claims that there are 32 fair price shops for the block's population of 48,000, and even the official figure is suspect, there seems not more than three such shops in the area.

The government's stand is firm: there are no starvation deaths. But while it is difficult to precisely explain what a starvation death can be taken to mean, government officials themselves admit in private that "hungry villagers have consumed leaves, wild roots and weeds: some of them poisonous; such inedible stuff has lowered the body's resistance to infectious germs, and thus the villagers have been dying."

But in public, the story is different. Orissa revenue minister Jugal Kishore recently told newsmen, "People are poor. But starvation? Oh, no!" The chief minister, J B Patnaik, flew to Kalahandi on March 6, in a specially chartered plane accompanied by a herd of officials. He inspected a few villages, posing for photographs clicked by a government photographer with the few healthy young men that he saw. He reprimanded a few old men

and women, accusing them of being oblivious of poverty and ill health. Finally, before he flew back, he had to face an obviously hostile crowd at the airstrip which booed and hissed at his pronouncements about the state of Kalahandi.

Orissa has been experiencing such soul-wrenching conditions for some time now. But the princely state of Kalahandi has

never witnessed such drought and famine before. P K Deo, the last maharaja of Kalahandi and erstwhile MP from the area, says that during the great Bengal Famine, rice was sent from Kalahandi to distressed areas. According to him, Kalahandi became susceptible to famine only after Madhya Pradesh's Nawapara subdivision was attached to the district after independence.

Orissa Chief Minister Considers Survival Diet A 'Delicacy'

Sunday Observer Correspondent Dhiren Bhagat reported in that paper (March 29 April 4 1987) that on his visit to Kalahandi district recently he was horrified to see adivasis eating large red ants, their larvae, salt and haldi cooked together as their sole meal of the day, just in order to survive, barely. He was witness to this in Kendubardi, a village in the worst hit part of Kalahandi, Lanjigarh block. He was told there was no other food this year.

In the state capital of Bhubaneswar Bhagat met the Chief Minister, J.B. Patnaik. In the course of the conversation the CM appeared to be unaware of the desperate conditions pertaining in the district. When Bhagat told him about the ants, the Chief Minister, said that this

was not unusual, and went on to state that this was not a staple food but a "type of delicacy". (The interview was taped.) While waiting to see the Chief Minister, Bhagat discussed the ants in Kendubardi with the collector of Kalahandi, who he says, "looked surprised but sorrowful". Not so a DIG seated in the same ante-room who laughingly remarked that it might be a connoisseur's food, and "quite tasty". Bhagat, to be on the totally safe side, checked the diet of red ants with an expert who has done research on Orissa famines. She told him it was certainly not a delicacy, rather a 'distress food'.

The question: Has the Chief Minister visited these adivasi areas? Or is he too busy in the capital, as concerned as the starving adivasis, for his survival, but of a different sort?

In 1966, the then prime minister, Indira Gandhi had to tour Nawapara, so severe was the famine that gripped it at that time. A large number of starvation deaths were reported. At that time, the state government made an honest admission on the floor of the House: "... these deaths were due to superimposed ailments because of prolonged undernourishment and malnutrition. ..." But the present regime of J B Patnaik refused to entertain the possibility of starvation, as, according to them, there is no shortage of food. The fact remains that unless something is done about the situation immediately, the tribals and harijans, who comprise 50 per cent of Kalahandi's 13.5 lakh population, will have to rest many more of their brethren in the lap of their parched homeland. (NEWSSCRIPT)

Kalahandi Calling

Hunger and drought are persistent occurrences in Orissa's most backward district, Kalahandi. Largely inhabited by the scheduled castes and tribes who comprise 47 percent of its population, it also has the largest proportion of agricultural labourers 35 per cent of the workers in the State. However Kalahandi had remained obscure in its backwardness till the Prime Minister chose to visit the district and enquire into the effect of the drought, in late 1985. Since then Kalahandi's hunger has become news for the national media.



NEWSHOUND



By Rap

Violence Brewing Among Opposing Communities

By T.C. Joseph

News reports have been appearing from time to time of trouble brewing in the tribal Chotanagpur area of Bihar between the Christian church and the RSS and other Hindu fundamentalist organisations. In its issue of January 18 to 24 1987, the Bombay based *Sunday Observer* carried a story about how a small circulation

Catholic weekly, *The Examiner* had been charged by the Maharashtra Government for spreading communal disharmony. *The Examiner* had carried stories under the headings "RSS plans to wipe out tribal Christians" and "RSS has started to implement its strategies as alleged." Below is a story about the whole bizarre affair.

Tribal Belt A Stronghold Of Catholicism

Along with central Kerala and Goa, the Chotanagpur tribal belt is a stronghold of Catholicism in India. Many of the shrines in the region are not large enough to contain congregations on Sundays and festive occasions. Christians comprise 20 per cent of the population and are concentrated in villages in sizable numbers. However, they live under the shadow of a past which was a virtual saga of exploitation till missionaries entered the area and injected massive doses of spiritual and socio-economic aid. The perspective of the tribals changed; they became conscious of their rights and hoped for a better life ahead.

Since emancipation went hand in hand with mass conversions to Christianity, erstwhile power elements found in religion a handy weapon with which to attack them. The cross became a sign of conflict, the missionary presence was resented; the Christians and non-Christians took up positions in opposing camps. For a full decade after independence trouble erupted in the regions at both sporadic and regular intervals. A lull followed, but three years ago that was broken, converting the entire region, with its various chunks of territory jutting out into Madhya and Orissa, into a mini-battle front. The forces that have now emerged are the Church, with its institutional power and communities of fervent flock, ranged against groups which the local hierarchy have identified as the RSS and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP).

A Tug-Of-War

It is a tug-of-war with each side in turn trying to win over tribal loyalties. Christian organisations view the people as traditionally deprived and used as pawns in the games of money-lenders, forest contractors, middlemen and landlords who, in league with the bureaucracy, imposed vexatious taxes, exacted forced labour and dispossessed peasants of their lands. In short, the issue relates to human rights. The RSS and the VHP interpret the situation differently. They accuse the church of unbridled evangelising activity that has led to 'denationalisation of the people by anti-national missionaries' and

even their alienation from their traditional culture.

The confrontation between followers of the two faiths took organised shape in 1984 when anti-Christian speeches were made in places like Ranchi and Jashpur in M.P. From September of the same year, and for the ensuing six months, tension mounted in Nanesera (Bihar) arising from a dispute over a place of worship in the village. Violence was imminent. Though better sense eventually prevailed, these events did nothing to favour harmony. Just then news of the papal visit, scheduled for February 1986, kicked up a lot of dust and pamphlets were distributed in select towns in Bihar and M.P., cautioning people against a mass conversion drive. This was accompanied by competitive mushrooming of temples and institutions irrespective of what was needed and where.

Bizarre Rumours

What followed was bizarre. In mid-1986, Fr. Alex Ekta of Raigarh reported to *The Examiner* that the RSS had set afoot a conspiracy to administer drugs to tribal girls to make them sterile, spread immorality among them by inducting them into brothels, and also to infiltrate Christian institutions to foment trouble! He further claimed that wells in the region were being poisoned and adulterated food sold cheap or given free to Christians to make them sick. Quite naturally, there was panic among the Christians, resulting in a greater rift between them and non-Christian communities.

Another priest now entered the war of words. In a series of editorials in *Nishkalanka* of May 1986, Fr. John Lakra accused the RSS of masterminding in the Rathe same strategies as in Raigarh. The police, however did not consider *Nishkalanka* altogether innocent and instituted cases against Fr. Lakra for inviting communal feelings, and against Fr. Patrick Tete of Kuntli who used the public address system to warn the people against these alleged strategies. There is admission in church circles, and even on the part of the Rev. Telesphore Toppo, Archbishop of Ranchi, that the language used by the priests, themselves tribals, could have been more judicious. But he also felt that there had been a need to warn the people.

As it later transpired, facts proved stranger than fiction. The Bihar branch of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, in its findings, made public on January 1, 1987, has confirmed the reports of the priests, and in the process censored fundamentalism, and accused the administration of a jaundiced outlook.

In the context of this curious drama, the Chotanagpur church does not consider 1985 later to 10 missionaries in M.P. and in February the new who subsequently left India. All these priests were connected with the

no means localised. It extends from Basauni near the Kharagpur hills to Ranchi and down to Raigarh in M.P. and Phulbani in Orissa. The clergy nurses the grievance that government has not bothered to probe into the unfortunate incidents, the Press has failed to understand the issues involved and distorted them, only contributing confusion to existing bias and ignorance.

Church Power

Church power in the belt is undeniable and extends to the four huge ecclesiastical provinces of Ranchi, Sambalpur, Rai-

cases on behalf of the tribals against landlords, freed them from bonded labour and restored to them their land. Later they set up educational institutions, agricultural cooperatives and income-generating enterprises. The foreigners turned out to be the proverbial saviours of people in bondage whose loyalty was there for the asking. Here the grateful beneficiaries sought out the pastors (the reverse was not the case) and crowds made a beeline for Baptism, bringing about instant success for Christianity. Liberation theology was unheard of then, but it was in action in an unfinished form.

Foreign P

In 1960, about 60 per cent of the priests functioning in Chotanagpur were foreigners, but now this figure has come down to 12 per cent. The tribal congregations are the mainstay of Christianity in north India and provide a majority of the pastors in the surrounding missions. What has upset the church's applecart are the reconversion drives of the RSS-the RSS missionaries claim to have reconverted 75,000 tribals during the past two years. Success in reconversion notwithstanding, it remains a historical fact that the tribals never belonged to any of India's traditional religions; they were animists, without a caste system, temples or idols. In some quarters they are even referred to as "banwasis", a term which is rather objectionable and anthropologically unfounded. Converts have been labelled as foreign stooges, with highly unprintable tags attached.

Explosive Situation

The Christian community has often been acclaimed as peaceful and inoffensive but for the first time lost the right to complacency in 1982, when communal riots took the lives of 10 Christians and 11 Hindus, in Kanyakumari and both churches and temples were desecrated or damaged. A similar situation seems to be brewing in Chotanagpur where the very same forces are operating. Apparently, Christians themselves have not been successful in the effort to build bridges of friendship. If the church ever had an opportunity in recent history to draw upon its inner reserves and work for peace through dialogue and goodwill, it is here, in Chotanagpur.

By Rap



local missions. The administration did not specify the charges against the missionaries.

When it came to the tussle between the opposing communities, the administration's role was merely dilly-dally. No serious effort was made to identify the root of the problem or institute enquiries, nor did law enforcing authorities do their bit. Government officials from top to bottom confined themselves to making promises of action that never followed. There were 565 killings in the area in 1985-86 which remain unexplained; and the crisis is by

garh and Ambikapur. The Catholics alone have nearly a 1000 institutions of various shapes and sizes comprising high schools, colleges, technical institutes, orphanages, leper asylums, hospitals, dispensaries, nunneries, seminaries, and parishes. Backed by foreign funds, the organisation wields an institutional strength and influence which non-Christian bodies can hardly match.

Missionaries have been as much concerned with the body as the soul. Ever since their entry into Chotanagpur in the 1880s, they fought and won

NEWSHOUND

